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Academic and social aspects of recent immigrant children's school experiences in a public elementary school in a U.S.-Mexico border town in South Texas

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ACADEMIC AND SOCIAL ASPECTS OF

RECENT IMMIGRANT CHILDREN'S SCHOOL EXPERIENCES IN A PUBLIC

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL IN A U.S.-MEXICO BORDER TOWN IN SOUTH TEXAS

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Academic and Social Aspects of Recent Immigrant Children's School Experiences in a Public Elementary School in a U.S.- Mexico Border Town in South Texas

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Dedicatoria

Este trabajo va dedicado a todas aquellas personas que han emigrado de sus paises de origen por diferentes razones. Para ellos todo mi respeto y admiración, porque han tenido el valor de dejar atras su terruño, la tierra que los vió nacer. No es sencillo dejar lo conocido por lo desconocido, pero la ilusión de una nueva vida es el motor motivador de esperanza en la nueva tierra a la que se emigra. A todos aquellos padres de familia que emigran sacrificando sus origenes, sus costumbres, su forma de vida, por darle una vida mejor a sus hijos. A los hijos que siguen a sus padres sin saber a ciencia cierta que será de sus vidas, confiando en el sueño de sus padres donde ven un mañana prometedor. A todos aquellos maestros que creen firmemente que los niños migrantes forman parte importante del futuro del país, y que se comprometen día a día por hacer de los sueños de sus alumnos una realidad.

Dedication

This work is dedicated to all the people who have emigrated from their countries of origin for different reasons. My respect and admiration goes to all of them because they have had the courage to leave their land for the unknown, for a new life. To all of those parents who sacrifice their roots, traditions, and lifestyles, in order to offer their children a better life. To all the children who follow their parents without knowing what their lives will be like, trusting their parents' dreams for a promising tomorrow. To all educators who firmly believe immigrant children are an important part of the future of the country, who work daily to make their students' dreams become reality.

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My father Eduardo represents my past. You are the man who had been my role model my entire life. Papi, te dedico este proyecto por ser el modelo de padre perfecto. Este proyecto es un reflejo de dedicación y arduo trabajo. Tú y mi mamá fueron los que desde pequeña me enseñaron que la vida que uno tiene es la que se forja día a día, tomando las decisiones adecuadas, con honestidad, ética, y amor a la profesión elegida por vocación. Agradezco a Dios el seguirte teniendo como parte de mi vida.

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keep in mind that if I completed a doctoral degree, you can do that and more. I pray to God to let you go even further than what I have accomplished.

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Abstract

ACADEMIC AND SOCIAL ASPECTS OF

RECENT IMMIGRANT CHILDREN'S SCHOOL EXPERIENCES IN A PUBLIC

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL IN A U.S.-MEXICO BORDER TOWN IN SOUTH TEXAS

Alicia Judith Bolt

The University of Texas at Brownsville and Texas Southmost College, 2011

In this study I examined school experiences of recent immigrant students who came to the Ollin South elementary school in Texas, U.S., with prior schooling in Yolitzli, Tamaulipas, Mexico. Using an ethnographic perspective, I analyzed how children and their parents and teachers described children's schooling experiences, challenges, and transition processes.

I conducted semi-structured and open-ended interviews with ten students enrolled in 1st through 5th grade in a public elementary school in Ollin, Texas. I also interviewed the parents and teachers of the students to gain a broader perspective of student experiences and schooling processes on both sides of the border. Through four levels of analyses, I identified two main aspects of schooling which shaped student educational experiences and opportunities.

The first was the academic aspect, which included differences in language, curriculum, and content areas. Participants revealed that student lack of proficiency in the English language, the different structure of the curriculum, and the different ways of teaching reading, math and science, initially presented challenges to the students coming

to Ollin South. However, native language support provided by peers and teachers as well teachers' and parents' active roles in building on student prior learning enabled the children to adapt to and succeed in the new school.

The second aspect of schooling emphasized by the participants was the social aspect, which included peer support, friends, and recreational time. Study participants made visible how peer support and making friends became instrumental in new immigrant children learning to navigate the new school and understand academic materials. Children also emphasized the importance of recreational time and made visible how an expectation of unstructured play time brought from Yoliztli could become transformed into structured play activities within a new physical education class structure.

Children, parents, and teachers took advantage of the similarities between school contexts, and modified their expectations when confronted with differences. In this way, they demonstrated how knowledge of the differences in the school contexts as well as active roles of people involved in children's education can contribute to enhancing immigrant students' educational experiences and opportunities for success.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In the last century, international mobility of people has increased significantly all over the world (Consejo Nacional de Población, 2005). As a result of Mexico's economic crisis of the mid 1970's, Mexican immigration to the United States increased by thirteen in relation to the 1970's. By 2004, there were 10 million Mexicans living in the United States (Passel, 2009). The most recent published report of the Pew Hispanic Center (Passel, 2009) estimated that there are about 11,470 million foreign born, Mexican origin inhabitants in the United States. According to the United Nations Population Division (Passel, 2009), one of the main causes for immigration is people looking for better economic opportunities for themselves and their families somewhere outside their countries of origin.

Even though emigration from Mexico to the United States has traditionally been from the interior of Mexico, recently emigration from Mexican Northern states (Gallo, 2004) has increased. According to the last survey taken by the National Institute of Statistics and Geography of Mexico (INEGI, 1995), there are approximately 644,808 families emigrating yearly from the northern Mexican state of Tamaulipas to the United States' state of Texas. Mexican families from states on the northern border are emigrating not only to look for better jobs but also to attain improved educational opportunities for their children. The children of families who successfully immigrate to the United States and enter the public school system then become immigrant students.

Immigrant students have become "the fastest-growing segment of the youth population" (Landale & Oropesa, 1995, as cited by Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco,

2006, p.1) in the United States of America. According to the American community survey of 2003, twenty percent of the students in this country have immigrant parents, and it is predicted that by the year 2040, one out of three children will be living in immigrant homes (Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2006).

Over the last two decades, research regarding how immigrant students experience schooling in the United States has grown, particularly among educators interested in providing excellence, rather than just equity, for immigrant children. Educational researchers have analyzed the linguistic (González, Moll, & Amanti, 2005; Rodriguez, Ringler, O'Neal, & Bunn, 2009; Smith, Jiménez, & Martinez-León, 2003), emotional (Igoa, 1999; Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2006; Trueba, Moll, & Diaz, 1982), and socio cultural challenges (Crosnoe, 2005; Macias, 1992;Valdés, 1996) immigrant students face when immigrating to the United States' schools.

Assumptions have been made by educators about the differences between immigration children's pre-emigration and current school experiences in the United States. According to González and Moll (2005), some educators have claimed that immigrant children do not possess the necessary academic skills needed to function in the U.S. schools. As a consequence of the assumption that student pre-immigration schooling is not sufficient, educators often ignore previously acquired skills immigrant children bring with them. González and Moll (2005) argued that immigrant students do possess funds of knowledge that teachers should consider in designing classroom instruction. Despite prevailing assumptions, educators across the nation have worked to provide immigrant students with academic support they need to adapt and succeed in the new school.

Even though efforts have been previously made to provide immigrant children with a smooth transition to the United States' schools (Le-Blanc-Flores, 1996; Rodriguez et al. 2009), many decisions affecting immigrant children's education have been made without considering the perspectives of the main actors involved in immigration between schools: the children. Few research studies have examined immigrant children's views regarding how their pre-immigration school experiences influence their current schooling.

In this study, children's school experiences refer to cultural practices of school, including what the students can do and say, in what ways, when, where, or to whom, under what conditions, for what purposes, with what outcomes and consequences (Rex, 2006; Santa Barbara Classroom Discourse, 1992). Students reveal their experiences by talking about the two schools and their activities and relationships in each. Contrastive analyses of children's talk about their schools make visible how the similarities and differences in the two settings shape children's experiences in the new school. Parents' and teachers' views on children's school experiences provide additional inputs to explain those experiences as well.

Personal Background

My interest in studying experiences of recent immigrant children coming from Mexico to the United States of America emerged when I was working as a third grade bilingual teacher in a dual language program. As I was getting used to the U.S. schooling system myself, I received a newcomer to my class: Teresita. Teresita was an 8 year-old student from Mexico. Even though she was a dedicated student, I noticed she struggled

with academics. I could not understand why she was struggling since she was coming in Mexico from the same third grade level. I assumed that the school curriculum from Mexico was aligned with the school curriculum in the U.S.

It was not until we went on a field trip to the Alamo in San Antonio, Texas that my preconceived assumptions were challenged. As we watched a movie about the story of the Alamo, Teresita approached me to ask about the story being told specifically to ask if the story was true since she had previously heard a different version of the same events in Mexico. At that moment I realized that I could not expect Teresita to know the content I was teaching. It was not that she did not know what was being taught. Teresita had simply been previously exposed to history about the Alamo from another perspective, a Mexican perspective. She knew the content, but it was different from the one I was teaching.

From that day on, I started reflecting on the differences and/or discrepancies found in the content taught to students coming to the U.S. from Mexico. I also reflected on the number of times teachers ignored these differences and assumed immigrant students struggled because they did not possess the knowledge. By conducting interviews with immigrant children, I sought to explore and better understand the similarities and differences that exist between their school experiences in the U.S. and their previous school experiences in Mexico. I believe that by understanding the differences in schooling from children's point of view, I could adjust my school's teaching practices and help other teachers design lessons which incorporate immigrant student views and prior knowledge.

Statement of the Problem

When their parents immigrate or commute, Mexican-origin immigrant children experience academic and social transitions between schools that belong to different countries. Because differences between countries of origin and entry are very complex, Kitchen (2007) argued that educational researchers needed to analyze the multi-dimensional transitions immigrant children experience when they move between schools of different countries. In calling for such research, Kitchen (2007) stated two main reasons: first, there are many children who experience transitions between borders and between classroom environments; second, these transitions need to be considered if educators want to support immigrant children enrolled in United States' schools. Kitchen (2007) added that if the transitions between schools are not smooth, they can become disruptions in students' learning trajectories.

In this study I sought to understand what children view as significant aspects of schooling when they compare their school experiences in Mexico to those in the U.S. I examined how immigrant children described their experiences in the new school of Ollin South in the U.S., as compared to their previous school experiences in Yoliztli, Mexico. This study contributes to research on immigrant students' experiences from their point of view. In this way, the study provides insights for educators to be able to gain understanding of the experiences and expectations recent immigrant children bring from their previous schools. It also demonstrates how previous schools experiences in Yoliztli, Mexico influence children's current schooling at Ollin South in the U.S. This study makes visible aspects of schooling that need to be considered to promote the educational success of children from Mexican-origin immigrant families.

Research Question

The study focuses on immigrant student experiences and understandings of schooling from their point of view. The question for the study is how do recent immigrant students coming with previous formal schooling in Yoliztli, Mexico, describe their schooling experiences in an Ollin, Texas, public elementary school, as compared to their former education in Yoliztli? The question is based on the assumption that "the educational process can be greatly enhanced when teachers learn about their students' current or previous life" (González et al., 2005, p. 6).

The Context

The United States-Mexico border is 1,952 miles with four states in the U.S: (Arizona, California, New Mexico, and Texas) bordering six states of Mexico (Baja California, Coahuila, Chihuahua, Nuevo Leon, Sonora, and Tamaulipas). The United States-Mexico border starts at San Diego, California in the U.S. and Tijuana, Baja California in Mexico and ends by the Gulf of Mexico near Brownsville, Texas and Matamoros, Tamaulipas. According to Romo (2007), more than 16.5 million people live along the U.S. side of the border. Koehler, Chow, Lee-Bayah, and Harrison (2002) stated that these numbers experience a fluctuation that is reflected in U.S. schools' attendance and enrollment percentages. The fluctuations are due mainly because the students' parents lack steady employment and move among different communities along the U.S.-Mexico border. Figure 1.1 represents Koehler et al.'s (2002) summary of the different reasons for attendance and enrollment fluctuations in schools.

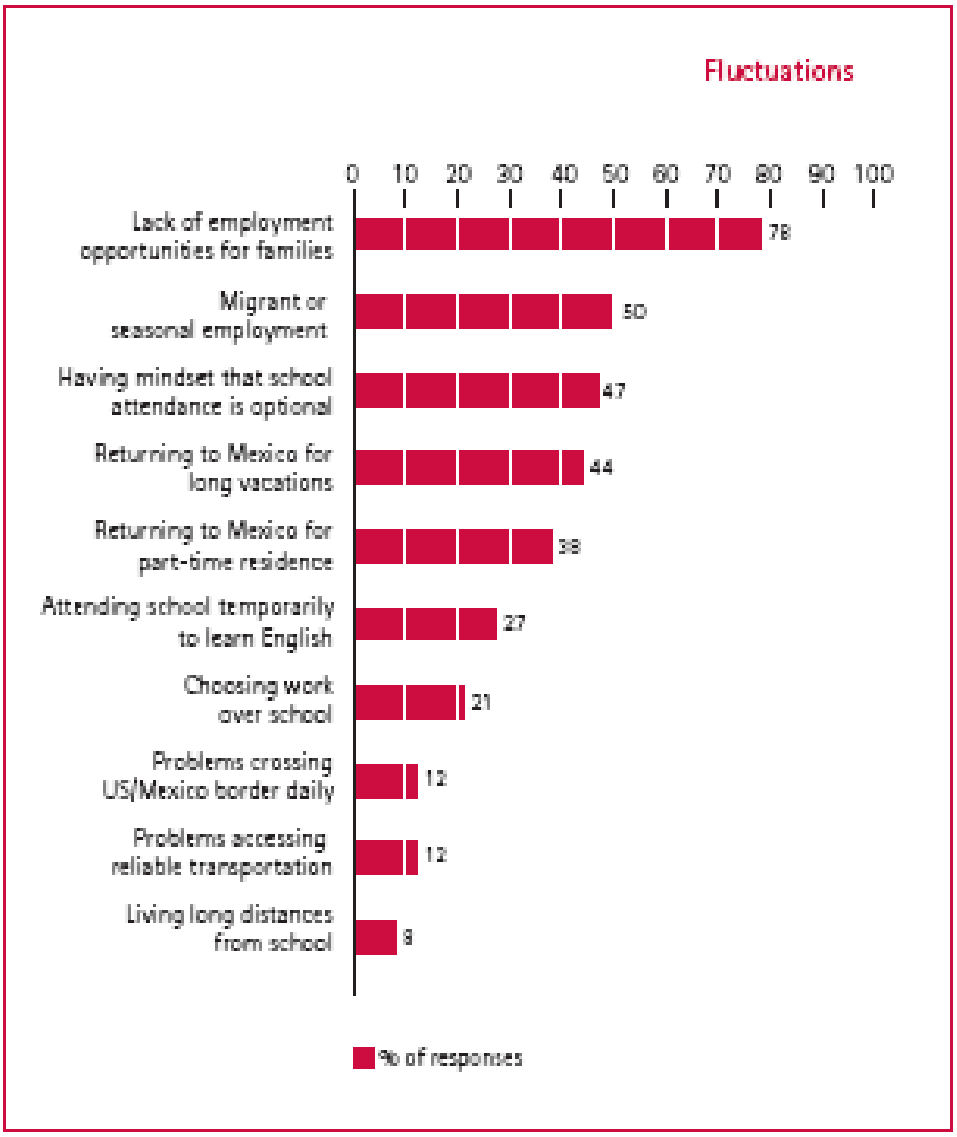


Figure 1.1 Reasons for attendance/enrollment fluctuations (Koheler et al., 2002, reproduced with permission of the authors)

The figure indicates that in addition to employment-based mobility, immigrant students' attendance is influenced by their family going back to Mexico for different purposes, for long or short periods of time. Immigrant students' absences or tardiness are also attributed to problems they face when attempting to cross the border daily (see figure 1.1). Students who reside in Mexico but cross to attend school on a daily basis are called

"day crossers" (Koheler et al., 2002, p. 10). Long lines at the international bridges are one of the problems day crossers experience. Problems like the ones portrayed by Koehler et al. (2002) are common among immigrant children. Immigrant students experience multiple challenges when having to attend school. At the same time, schools with considerable numbers of immigrant children are also faced with the challenges of educating a diverse group of students who bring different experiences and expectations of school from their prior countries of residence. As will be demonstrated in this study, some of these challenges can be addressed when teachers find ways to understand immigrant student experiences, reach out to the students and their parents, and find ways to integrate student funds of knowledge (González et al., 2005) into the learning process.

This study was conducted at one of the 36 public elementary schools in Ollin, Texas. The town is located across the border from the Mexican town of Yoliztli (town and participant names are pseudonyms). These border towns are divided geographically by a river. Ollin has a population of around 200,000 inhabitants and Yoliztli has a population of almost 530,000 inhabitants. Both towns are considered semi-urban areas. According to Romo (2007), due to a shared history based on the proximity of these communities, many of the inhabitants of each city belong to both communities. Their lives are carried out on both sides of the river, as they go back and forth from the Mexican to the American cities for different purposes, including work, shopping, recreation, medical services, and to attend school (Frausto-Ortega, 2009). Romo (2007) states that the two sides of the border have developed multifaceted relationships that have led them to become integrated economies on both sides of the border.

Furthermore, some scholars have studied how “transitional families” are spread within the two countries and “transborder families” have dwelt in the border area of Mexico and the United States (Ojeda, 2005; Cueva-Luna, 2009). Ojeda (2005) coined these terms to refer those families constituted by members who were born in both countries, with the difference that tansborder families have some of their members living in the border presumably with a more frequent interaction.

The U.S.-Mexican border possesses unique characteristics not only because the border was established in 1848 when there were already Mexican towns on both sides of the Rio Grande for whom there were implications in various and complex ways (Ceballos, 1988, Cueva-Luna, 2009) but also because the nature of this international border has resulted of the two nation’s specific pecularities that encompass different levels of development: The United States, the world’s most powerful and developed country, and Mexico, a nation that is still in developmental stages, with social and economical differences between inhabitants (Frausto-Ortega, 2009) .

The shared border and the differences as well as similarities between U.S. and Mexico create a need for bi-national understanding of the educational issues faced on both sides of the United States-Mexico border (Le-Blanc Flores, 1996). Mexican-origin immigrant students enrolling in more than one school system need to adapt to different school contexts. Educators on both sides of the border need to develop and foster a common understanding about both communities’ educational needs in order to appropriately educate future citizens who can succeed in the country in which immigrant students and their families choose to live.

Contributions of the Study

In this study I examine student perspectives of school experiences in Ollin, Texas as compared to their experiences in Yoliztli, Mexico. I also include the perspectives of student parents and teachers. Given that few studies have examined children's perspectives about schools in different countries, this study provides insights which can help educators in the U.S. to understand immigrant children's experiences and to integrate those experiences into the curriculum. By making visible the academic and social aspects of schooling children emphasize, this study identifies academic and social factors that children, their teachers, and parents identify as major supports and constraints for student success. The needs uncovered include language support, content and teaching strategy alignment, and recreational time and peer support. Understanding these factors can help educators address the most pressing needs immigrant children face.

This study challenges the current emphasis on academic achievement as measured by test scores and presents a more complex view of education from children's point of view. Children, teachers, and parents participating in this study made visible that educational success of immigrant children is shaped by the academic supports and opportunities, as well as by the social elements of schooling. Integrating academic and social aspects and providing appropriate supports can enable all elementary-age students, not only immigrant students, to develop relationships with teachers and peers that can help them succeed in the classroom.

This study also makes a contribution to border studies. Analyses of participant perspectives revealed that despite the differences in Mexican and U.S. schooling systems, similarities such as the use of Spanish language and peer support within classrooms,

provide supports for students immigrating from Mexico to the U.S. border areas. Also, the large numbers of existing bilingual speakers among children and adults in border areas demonstrate the importance of using two languages to advance student academic development and social skills. While schools around the nation may be enforcing English-only or early-transition bilingual programs, there are ways in which parents, teachers, and student peers can draw on their bilingual skills to help students succeed.

This study shows that student success can be enhanced when schools, parents, communities, and other children all take responsibility and action to promote student school success. Crucial to taking action is undestanding student prior experiences and needs. When educators can work with families, students, and communities, they can use funds of knowledge (González et al., 2005) to facilitate equitable access to educational opportunities for all children.

While I separated academic and social aspects of schooling for analysis purposes, these aspects are interrelated in the way children talk about school. This study demonstrates that it is important to consider not just student achievement in academic aspects, but also the social aspects and how social opportunities interrelate with the academic. If teachers can acknowledge academic and social aspects of recent immigrant students' experiences, they may make a difference in their classrooms and produce successful students that can achieve and exceed school expectations.

Overview of the Dissertation

This study is presented in six chapters and an appendix section. In the first chapter I provided a brief introduction to the purpose of this study. I also described the context of

the study and the statement of the problem. In chapter two, I include a review of the research literature about school experiences of immigrant children. In this chapter, I review literature that examines the contextual factors in immigrant children's schooling, including research concerning the educational experiences of immigrant youth, and research concerning the academic and social aspects of schooling of immigrant youth.

In chapter three I present the methodology used in the study starting with an introduction to the ethnographic perspective guiding the examination of student, teacher, and parent insider perspectives about children's schooling. I then describe the site of the study and how participants were selected. I also present student profiles as well as their teachers' and parents' characteristics. I later talk about the ethics involved in the study, and my position and role as a researcher. I explain the methods I employed to collect data, as well as the four-level process of analysis constituting the logic of inquiry for this study.

In chapters four and five I present the findings of the study. Each finding is represented through analyses of purposefully selected segments of the transcripts that emphasize students', teachers', and parents' perspectives. Analyses of transcripts enabled me to identify two main aspects of children's school experiences: academic and social. Chapter four includes findings related to academic aspects of children's schooling experiences, including topics of language and school curriculum. Chapter five includes findings related to the social aspects of schooling, including topics of recreational time, friends, and peer support.

The last chapter includes implications for the field and recommendations for further research. At the end of the chapter I include a statement about the potential

significance of the study and its contribution to the field. An appendix section includes copies of interviews protocols.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

In this chapter I examine literature from the fields of education and cultural anthropology to explore children's experiences in schools. The literature is selected to inform my research question: how do recent immigrant students coming with previous formal schooling in Yoliztli, Mexico, describe their schooling experiences in an Ollin, Texas, public elementary school, as compared to their former education in Yoliztli? The studies included as part of this literature review analyze Mexican immigrant students' experiences in the U.S. schools and the factors that support or hinder students' school experiences. All of the reviewed studies focus on the academic and social experiences of Mexican-origin students.

Selecting Relevant Literature

From the electronic databases available at the University of Texas at Brownsville electronic library, I started conducting the literature review by searching the ERIC database using key words "immigrants," "school," and "research." I delimited my search to peer reviewed journals, with dates of publication between 1999 and 2009. I also delimited the literature research to a specific level of education in order to identify literature about elementary school age children by using "early childhood," or "elementary education," or "preschool education," or "primary education."

The search conducted using the ERIC database with the aforementioned terms and phrases yielded 57 articles, from which I selected 33 as related to the scope of my

study. The final article selection was made by determining whether the content was contributing to my understanding of the literature, and informing the research question fo this study. Any articles that did not have a direct connection to the research question were excluded. After identifying 11 articles through systematic searches in the ERIC database, I then grouped the articles into two themes. These themes included academic aspects of school curriculum and language, and social aspects that included peer support, school context, and students' interactions.

After reading each of the articles, I also followed reference trails and identified additional articles related to literacy. In addition to reviewing empirical articles, I also identified other literature sources by consulting with my dissertation committee members and identifying articles and books from my graduate courses. The literature I collected through these methods enabled me to examine school curriculum, language, literacy, peer support, school context, and student interactions as topics which informed my research focus on Mexican-origin immigrant children's school experiences in the U.S. elementary schools.

The literature review for this study included fieldbased studies that described students of Mexican-origin from different age groups. The literature review was organized into two sections: (1) academic aspects of school experiences, and (2) social aspects of school experiences. The first section was separated into research that has analyzed school curriculum, literacies, language, as well as parents' view of language. The second section was separated into students' interactions, socialization and peer support, as well as school context. A synthesis of selected research on immigrant students can be found at the end of this chapter.

Academic Aspects of Immigrant Students' School Experiences

Scholars have argued that educators need to understand immigrant children's pre-emigration school experiences in order to be able to provide the support students need in post-emigration settings. According to Macias (1992), Mexican origin immigrant children bring their former schooling experiences in Mexico schools into the new learning environments in the United States' schools. Macias (1992) and LeBlanc-Flores (1996) state that in order for teachers to effectively teach students who had recently arrived from Mexico, or "who are involved in a seasonal rotation between Mexico and the United States" (Le-Blanc Flores, 1996, p. 25), educators need to gain knowledge about recent immigrant students' pre-emigration classrooms and then translate that knowledge into practice.

School Curriculum

In order to gain knowledge about recent immigrant students' educational experiences, researchers have analyzed various aspects of the school system on both sides of the U.S. – Mexico border. In my literature searches I identified six research studies which examined school curricula and their impact on children's opportunities for learning as well as on teachers' ownership and promotion of curricular goals. Macias (1990) and Bryan and McLaughlin (2005) examined school curriculum in Mexican schools and determined that curriculum adaptation is as an essential factor to meet students' needs. Even though all Mexican schools were required to follow the same national curriculum established by the Mexican National Education System (Secretaría de Educación Pública,

SEP) Macias (1990) and Bryan and McLaughlin (2005) discovered different forms of curriculum application and adaptation in Mexican classrooms.

Macias (1990) studied formal dimensions of school curriculum by analyzing classroom instruction, while Bryan and McLaughlin (2005) examined the way teachers used curriculum activities to guide their students towards a more responsible behavior in classrooms. Bryan and McLaughlin (2005) discovered that teacher actions of promoting responsibility in the classroom enabled students to carry the school curriculum outside their classrooms and into their communities. Igoa (1999) and Candela (1997) similarly examined how the Mexican curriculum was adopted by teachers throughout the day and discovered that Mexican teachers used curriculum creatively to develop thematic, interactive, and hands-on approaches.

Macias (1990), Bryan and McLauglin (2005), Igoa (1999) and Candela (1997) demonstrated that Mexican teachers adapted the national curriculum by developing theme-based units, which enabled the teachers to use time effectively and teach more than one subject throughout the same theme. These studies demonstrated that teachers adopted and adapted the national curriculum in creative ways instead of using it prescriptively. Teachers taught the curriculum in meaningful and relevant ways through hands-on activites and exposure to realia, manipulatives, and experiments, impacting their student's lives beyond school through projects that involved community and families.

Researchers made visible the importance of studying how teachers implement and modify school curriculum according to their students' and their families' previous knowledge. Kitchen (2007) and González et al. (2005) analyzed how science and math

were taught and practiced at the immigrant students' homes in the U.S. González et al. (2005) researched a group of bilingual teachers who incorporated families' local knowledge as part of their lessons. These teachers noticed that their students utilized different mechanics when learning about science and math and decided to go to the students' homes to see if these different mechanics were derived from their parents' study practices. Teachers visiting student homes noticed a variety of ways in which immigrant students' parents used math and science concepts in their real life. Once teachers became aware of the differences in ways of using math and science at home, they were able to incorporate immigrant families' funds of knowledge (González et al., 2005) as part of their school curriculum.

While Gonzalez et al. (2005) demonstrated how teachers could help their students by learning from the differences in math and science activities at home and in school, Kitchen (2007) focused on understanding the differences in math teaching in Mexico and the U.S. Kitchen (2007) explored Latino students' opportunities to learn mathematics in Mexico and the U.S. by contrasting each country's unique characteristics of curriculum and instruction, teachers' practices, and teachers' knowledge and beliefs about mathematics and teaching. Immediately after observing a math lesson in a U.S. or Mexican school, Kitchen (2007) conducted semi-structured interviews with each teacher, asking them to talk about their classroom ativities and understanding of mathematics. Based on the teachers' interviews, Kitchen (2007) analyzed the differences in ways math was taught in the U.S. and Mexico and discovered that the U.S. teachers used a systematic approach which focused on on step-by-step procedures and cumulative knowledge of math, while Mexican teachers used a more constructivist approach through

hands-on activites and manipulatives, focusing on a concrete-to-more abstract conceptual development of math as a way of thinking. Kitchen (2007) discovered that while Mexican teachers emphasized beliefs on constructivist learning theories, U.S. teachers gave particular emphasis to affective learning theories by "validating" their students as a priority in their mathematics classrooms.

Kitchen (2007) also discovered similarities among U.S. and Mexico's teachers that included the belief of incorporating students' cultural values (U.S.) and home environment (Mexico) into their math lessons in order to effectively engage their students in learning. He emphasized the importance of teachers in the U.S. adapting the curriculum based on their immigrant students' previous experiences and unique needs. Teachers in the U.S. acknowledged the benefits of incorporating culturally relevant themes to which their students could relate in the mathematics lessons. They incorporated their students' home/cultural backgrounds as part of their lessons as a means to engage immigrant students in learning.

A common finding in the Bryan and McLaughlin's (2005), Candela's (1997), Kitchen's (2007), and González et al.'s (2005) studies is that Mexican and U.S. teachers working with Mexican-origin children actively participated in curriculum adaptation through incorporation of local knowledge. Kitchen (2007) and González et al. (2005) demonstrated that teachers also incorporated students' responses to activities as many times as possible. Learning activities took the students' inquiry from the concrete to the more abstract. Candela (1997) and Kitchen (2007) confirmed that teachers included hands-on approaches throughout different activities and lessons, and textbooks framed lessons and activities as problem-solving exercises.

The review of literature on school curriculum and its implementation has revealed that in order to understand what immigrant children learn at school, it is important to consider not only the official curriculum, but also how the curriculum that is used by teachers and schools. Studies have shown that regardless the structured curricula in both Mexico and the U.S. school systems, teachers of immigrant children are adapting and modifying curriculum to aid the students' adjustments to the new school. The studies reviewed in this section also call for further studies to examine both Mexican and U.S. school contexts at the same time in order to portray the contemporary differences children face when moving from a school in Mexico to a school in the U.S. By examining school curricula to which children have been exposed before and after immigration, researchers and educators can better understand the scope and sequence of the students' academic trajectories. Such understanding can then provide a basis for developing ways to help immigrant students succeed in their new schools (Kitchen, 2007).

Social Context of Literacy

Over the last four decades literacy educators have emphasized the need to examine the social context of literacy learning (Barton, Hamilton, & Ivanic, 2000; Cook-Gumperz, 2006; Edelsky, 1991; Santa Barbara Classroom Discourse Group, 1992) in order to help students develop academic and social literacies for school success. Scholars demonstrated that understanding immigrant students' prior knowledge, social environment, and ways of learning may help educators identify factors that support and constrain children's literacy acquisition (Heath, 1983; Lee, 1997). By understanding the social contexts of literacy, educators can then develop ways of bridging students' pre-

and post-immigration schooling experiences (Macias, 1992). Learning literacy is a complex process, since, as Smith et al. (2003) argued, "literacy involves more than the reading process by itself" (p. 2) and is influenced by the context in which reading is constructed. The Santa Barbara Classroom Discourse Group (1992) similarly stated that to understand literacy and how students learn to read in a particular classroom, researchers and educators have to study how members of the class build literacy as part of their everyday life within classrooms and beyond.

To facilitate the teaching and learning of culturally relevant literacies, in the last three decades, educational researchers have studied ways of incorporating immigrant students' literacy practices to benefit student learning. González (2007), Moll (2000), Rockwell (1995), and Valdés (1996) found that immigrant students' forms and practices of literacies encompass using oral and written language to solve everyday problems and to communicate with others in purposeful ways. González (2007), Moll (2000), Rockwell (1995) and Valdés (1996) argued that a culturally-relevant literacy, which builds on student home literacies can enable educators to reduce cultural differences between students' pre and post immigration school settings.

Researchers interested in immigrant student school success have studied literacy instruction and practices on both sides of the border. Smith et al. (2003) studied immigrant children's sending communities and examined how literacy was constructed at elementary classrooms in local private schools in Mexico. Later, this study was expanded by Smith, Murillo, and Jimenez (2008), who examined the public school system in the same community. By examining literacy instruction and practices in private and public Mexican schools, the authors revealed that literacy instruction in the Mexican schools

was focused on form over content. Smith and colleagues' (Smith et al., 2003; Smith et al., 2008) studies of literacy learning in Mexico demonstrated that children acquire literacy not only within schools but also as part of their social contexts. The authors provided information teachers and schools in the U.S. can use in understanding immigrant children's prior literacy learning processes. By understanding how children acquire literacy as part of their social context, teachers can bridge literacy processes among schools. In doing so, teachers can create opportunities that build on student prior knowledge and experiences as they learn to read and write in their native and second languages (González et al., 2005).

Language

Immigrant students are challenged upon their arrival to U.S. classrooms by having to learn content in a language that is not their native tongue (Collier & Thomas, 1996). One of the primary challenges the new school demands from recent immigrant students is a requirement for speaking, listening, reading, writing, and comprehending in a second language. In order to ameliorate the challenges faced by immigrant students when adapting to U.S. schools, it is important for teachers to develop teaching methods and strategies that have been known to provide effective support to English language learners. Research suggests that an effective way to support English language learners is through building on the student's native language (Collier & Thomas, 1996). However, often instruction in the United States' classrooms does not capitalize on children's native language abilities, especially in developing reading competencies (González et al. 2005; Rodriguez et al., 2009).

Even though research recommends bilingual programs that emphasize and sustain the students' native language (i.e. dual language, late-exit, maintenance programs) early-exit bilingual programs are the most popular among schools (Collier & Thomas, 1996). State accountability has been pushing school districts to implement early exit bilingual programs that result in having students transition into the English language without developing the necessary academic skills in their native language (Krashen, 1992). Recent immigrant students who come from other countries usually have limited English proficiency, but it is up to the campuses to determine how to best support the students' language skills.

Studies on the use of native language for instruction of English language learners (August & Hakuta, 1997; Collier & Thomas, 1996) have demonstrated that teaching reading in the students' first language facilitates second language acquisition and provides a smooth transition between instruction in students' native language and the second language (Crawford, 1992; Krashen, 1992). Krashen (1992) formulated a hypothesis that students are more apt to learn a second language when they receive comprehensible input and instruction which is relevant to students' lives and learning processes. He argued that if students are not able to comprehend what is being taught, learning cannot take place. He also argued that native language support is one of the ways of making second language input comprehensible for immigrant and all other second language learners (Krashen, 1992).

While Krashen (1992) theorized the impact of comprehensible input on second language acquisition, Gee (1992) analyzed the impact of social interaction for students who are in the process of acquiring a second language. Gee (1992) found that the more

students interacted with others, the better these students were able to develop a second language. Social interaction, especially in the early stages of childhood, benefits immigrant children (Gee, 1992) by providing them with opportunities to express themselves and learn with peers and adults about their new environment. González (2001) and Carhill, Suarez-Orozco, and Paez (2008) similarly argued that language allows children from different backgrounds to socialize with each other. She also stated that socializing facilitates language development, including the development of a child's native and second or subsequent languages.

Cummins (2006) similarly argued that acquiring a second language involves developing interpersonal communication skills as well as the academic language. He has proposed that acquiring basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS) takes one to two years, while developing cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) may take four to seven years. Cummins' (2006) distinction between BICS and CALP has been used to explain why English language learners, who seem to be able to communicate in English fluently, often struggle with academic learning (Freeman & Freeman, 2001). Cummins' (2006) and Krashen's (1992) theories have also provided grounding for bilingual and English as a second language (ESL) advocates' arguments that immigrant students and English learners require first language support in order to be able to develop language and social skills necessary for school success (Freeman & Freeman, 2001). Scholars studying language acquisition of English language learners have made visible how language mediates the development of social skills, conversational skills and academic proficiency immigrant children need to meet the schools' expectations (Krashen, 1992; Cummins, 2006; Gee, 1992; Carhill et al., 2008). The scholars reviewed in this section

also made visible that educators need to be knowledgeable of the demands immigrant children face so they can help English language learners through first language support, comprehensible input, facilitation of social interaction, and other teaching strategies.

Parents' Views of School as a Factor in Children's Academic Development

Research has shown that in addition to curriculum and language, parent involvement is an important factor in children's academic development. González (2001), Valdés (1996), and Trueba et al. (1982) observed and interviewed Mexican-origin families in which family members were originally born in Mexico, were first generation, and inhabitants of semi-rural areas on the U.S. side of the U.S.-Mexican border. These researchers examined immigrant parents' perceptions of school and of how their children learned in school.

González (2001) conducted an ethnographic study to explore language practices and discourse patterns of mothers of immigrant chidren as they engaged their children in literacy practices at home and as they helped them with homework. González (2001) discovered that while mothers had varied discourse practices in interacting with their children, they usually adopted school discourse and expectations when helping their children with homework. This finding demonstrated that mothers saw school educational practices and discourses as dominant and as separate from those of the home. González (2001) demonstrated that the mothers viewed schools as dictating what parents should do at home instead of forming partnerships with parents to support children's education. She argued that there should be a middle meeting ground in which schools and parents can

develop mutual educative processes that incorporate families' and schools' funds of knowledge.

In examining parents' views about school and their involvement in their children's education, Valdés (1996) observed and interviewed ten immigrant families in which the adults were of Mexican-origin, first generation, and lived in a semi-rural U.S. area near the U.S.-Mexican border. Through interviews, the researcher learned that parents of immigrant children did not feel competent enough to talk with school personnel. Many misunderstandings led them to believe that school personnel did not care about their children, mainly because the language used in school was not the language parents used. The misunderstandings were not limited to not being able to understand the language, but also included different views of the school and teachers' expectations. Parents did not understand why teachers asked their students to learn their ABC's because, in Spanish, learning combinations of letter sounds made more sense than single letters. Parents did not expect to be asked to help teachers develop their children's alphabet awareness skills at home. This study demonstrated that parents thought the job of the parent was limited to shaping children's behavior, leaving academic tasks to the school teacher.

Trueba et al. (1982) also interviewed parents and teachers of immigrant Latino students to examine parent willingness to be part of their children's education. In the first interviews, teachers expressed that parents of immigrant students were not concerned with their children's academic progress because they did not initiate contact with school. However, parent interviews revealed that parents were very concerned for their children's education but they were reluctant to contact teachers because they felt their role was to

support their children at home. They thought that schools expected them to only teach children discipline while leaving academic work for the teacher. Parents indicated that they did not initiate contact with school because they did not want to be perceived by teachers as interfering intruders. Based on these findings, Trueba et al. (1982) argued that parents and teachers needed to reach out to each other to develop ways of communicating so that they could support children's education at school and at home.

Gonzalez (2001), Nettles, Caughy, & O'Campo (2008) Trueba et al., (1982), and Valdés (1996) arrived at very similar findings stating that parents of recent immigrant students wanted to be part of their children's education, but they believed that the school's expectations only required them to educate their children in manners, respect, or behavior, leaving the academic aspects to the teachers. Nevertheless, most of the Mexican-origin parents of immigrant students remained advocates of their children's education and supported children at home academically by asking them about school, homework, and by trying to help when possible.

Literature on the academic aspects of immigrant students' school experiences has shown that school curriculum, language, literacies, and parental involvement are all important factors that impact immigrant children's academic trajectories. Scholars have demonstrated that educators need to be aware of differences in school expectations regarding curriculum, language, literacies, and parental involvement. Pre-emigration school settings have different curricula, different ways of teaching the curriculum, and different opportunities and expectations for language use and learning, when compared to the U.S. schools. Teachers also need to be aware of the expectations parents have when they bring their children to enroll into the U.S. schools. Parents are concerned for their

children's performance and are willing to participate in their children's education. Yet, parents face the same challenges as their children when having to navigate a different school curriculum and learn to read, write and communicate in a new language. Scholars have made visible the importance for school personnel to reach out to parents and draw on parent funds of knowledge instead of using assumptions that misinterpret parent views and constrain parent opportunities to help their children (Gonzalez, 2001; Trueba et. al, 1982; Valdés, 1996)

Social Aspects of Immigrant Students' School Experiences

Peer Support

Social aspects of schooling have been identified by researchers as a factor that influences immigrant students' experiences and academic performance (Suarez-Orozco & Todorova, 2006). Valenzuela (1999), and Suarez-Orozco and Todorova (2006) demonstrated that Mexican-origin immigrant students enrolled in U.S. schools tend to rely on people who surround them, including their peers, teachers, counselors, or school personnel. Immigrant children need friends with whom they can identify and who can help them navigate through the new school system (Suarez-Orozco & Todorova, 2006). Valenzuela (1999) and Suarez-Orozco and Todorova (2006) indicated that if newly arrived students do not develop social relationships in the new context, they will become disengaged, and consequently, the disengagement will influence their academic performance.

Crosnoe (2006), González (2001), and Suarez-Orozco and Todorova (2006) analyzed how the context and opportunities for social interaction impacted immigrant

students' school experiences. In examining how recent immigrant students experience their first days at school, Crosnoe (2006) and Suarez-Orozco and Todorova (2006) noticed that those students who immediately sought help from their classmates as well as from their parents and teachers were more successful socially and academically compared to those students who had a hard time finding a support network. In analyzing the importance of peer support, Risi, Gerhardstein, and Kistner (2003) and Kyratzis (2004) examined how peer support impacted students' educational outcomes and language development. Risi et al. (2003) analyzed social preferences of a group of elementary children and found that the lower the frequency of the children's social interaction the more negative the educational outcomes. The researchers also found that the student ability to communicate in the language of their peers was a key factor that determined which students were able to get the support from their peer relationships. Students' ability to communicate in their peers' language enabled them to establish peer relationships. Peer relationships impacted their educational outcomes in a positive way.

In Kyratzis' (2004) study, peer relationships were built through games. By analyzing the games children played, Kyratzis (2004) discovered that the games children constructed provided key scaffolds for second language learning. In order for children to access a peer group, they first needed to contribute to the creation of games. English language learners had to negotiate their speaking styles and language proficiency to establish positive relationships with their peers. Both Risi et al.'s (2003) and Kyratzi's (2004) studies confirmed that developing social relationships enables immigrant students to develop peer networks that help them succeed academically at school.

School Context

Immigrant children bring from their countries of origin experiences that might be different from those they can utilize in the new school context (Igoa, 1995). Meeting the needs of immigrant children can, therefore, be hard to accomplish since their school experiences are often dependent on the levels of understanding their peers and adults have about cultural adjustment and acculturation experiences (Igoa, 1999). Igoa (1999) states that upon their arrival to a new country, "some of the potential losses immigrant children face can be the loss of self-expression, self-identity, cultural identity, and confidence" (as cited in Park-Taylor, 2005, p.9). These losses, invoked by the differences between the native and the new country, create potential risks for immigrant children's adaptation to the school context of the new country (Igoa. 1995). Risks such as social alienation, inability to understand the environment and the talk around them can be minimized through peer and academic support.

Given the complexity of cultural adaptation processes, school adaptation is an important factor to consider in examining immigrant children's experiences. Studies by Crosnoe (2005) and Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco (2006) examined how immigrant children adapt to a new school context. These scholars studied the impact of individual and contextual factors on how immigrant children perceive their academic strengths and to what extent they become risk-takers throughout their lives. By examining the immigrant children's adaptation process to a new context as well as the impact that the new context had on the students Crosnoe (2005) and Suarez-Orozco and Suarez-Orozco (2006) discovered that students who participated in interesting, rigorous, and relevant

classes and activities were more likely to be engaged in school, than those students who were not.

Crosnoe (2005) also examined how characteristics of the school impacted students. He found that children from Mexican immigrant families tended to attend schools with particular characteristics such as being located in underprivileged neighborhoods, having a large low-income student population and having a student population with low attendance rates. Crosnoe (2005) stated that all these characteristics of the school context placed immigrant children at a greater disadvantage for academic achievement.

Crosnoe (2005), Suarez-Orozco and Suarez-Orozco (2006), and Igoa (1999) have made visible the importance of understanding differences in school settings when teaching immigrant children. By understanding the differences immigrant children face when moving between different school contexts, and by providing the necessary support to smoothen the transition between school contexts, teachers can help immigrant students to succeed in schools.

Students' Interactions and Perceptions of School

A few studies have examined students' interactions and perceptions about schools after students had attended schools in both Mexico and the U.S. Studies by Levinson (2001), Rodriguez et al. (2009), and Zuñiga and Hamann (2009) examined Mexican-origin high school students' perspectives regarding their educational experiences. Levinson's (2001) and Zúñiga and Hamann's (2009) studies were conducted at the immigrant students' sending communities in Mexico after students returned to Mexico

from the U.S. While Levinson (2001) focused on students' experiences at a public secondary school, Zúñiga and Hamann (2009) studied students' experiences in both public and private schools. Levinson (2001) conducted an ethnographic study to examine student culture as well as school identity in a junior high school in rural Mexico. Through analyses of students' interactions and perceptions of their school, Levinson (2001) found that students had a strong identity as members of the school. He discovered a strong and caring school culture that influenced the types of interactions students had. The interactions students had with the school impacted the students' lives after graduation from high school.

Like Levinson (2001), Zuñiga and Hamann (2009) also analyzed high school students' perceptions of schools. Through a mixed-methods approach, Zuñiga and Hamann (2009) surveyed 10,000 transnational students from Nuevo Leon and 7,600 from Zacatecas on their typical routine and patterns of interactions within the school contexts of Mexico and the U.S. In addition to surveys, researchers also conducted semi-structured interviews with 46 transnational students in Nuevo Leon and 75 in Zacatecas, as well as 25 teachers from both states. Students from the study did not perceive any difference made by teachers between them and their peers.

The majority of student comments about their experiences in Mexico and U.S. schools were positive. Students indicated that both U.S. and Mexican teachers cared for them and were supportive of their education. The main difference students mentioned in open-ended questions was that U.S. schools had a better rewarding system and more personalized attention, in comparison to Mexico's schools. Teachers, on the other hand, expressed a concern for transnational students who move between schools because these

students were usually academically behind in comparison to the rest of the students. Teachers wondered if they were academically at risk because of an inconsistency in what was taught at school.

Similarly to Levinson (2001) and Zuñiga and Hamman (2009), who worked in Mexico to study student views, Rodriguez et al. (2009) analyzed student's perspectives of their school environment in the U.S. As part of their study, Rodriguez et al. (2009) conducted surveys and open-ended questionnnaires with students to examine English language learner (ELL) students' perceptions of factors commonly associated with school climate, as well as students' self-esteem and self-efficacy. Results of the study provided evidence that suggested that even though students did not receive any type of linguistic support that could facilitate students' literacy development, they were still learning English for academic purposes. There was no significant difference found between ELL students' and regular students' perceptions of their school climate. English language learners all expressed having a positive experience at school. They even passed their peers when expressing their self-esteem and self-efficacy.

The studies reviewed above examined students' perceptions and interactions in the secondary schools in Mexico and the U.S. In my searches for literature about schooling experiences of Mexican-origin immigrant children enrolled at the United States' elementary schools, I found minimal information that presented student voices or perspectives. Much of the U.S. literature on Mexican-origin recent immigrant children had been about correlations of student characteristic variables and their academic performance or about adult perspectives on children's education. An argument was presented by Alldred (1998) for researchers to portray children's voices so that educators

could promote ways for the children "to start playing a more direct part in the production of the students' sociological knowledge in schools" (p.4). Alldred (1998) stated that by understanding student perspectives, scholars and educators may develop ways of improving opportunities for success for all students.

Summary of the Chapter

The studies included as part of this literature review examined academic and social aspects of immigrant students' school experiences.The majority of the reviewed studies focused on student experiences after immigrating (Crosnoe, 2005; Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2006), while a few studies considered pre-immigration educational settings (Levinson, 2001; Macias, 1992). Zuñiga and Hamman's (2009) study examined the perspectives of children returning from the U.S. to the students' places of origin in Mexico.

Studies that enhanced the understanding of the curriculum and learning environment in schools in Mexico have also been presented in this literature review. Educational researchers have conducted school ethnographies, spending years analyzing immigrant students' sending communities in order to learn what it is to be a student in a Mexican school (Candela, 1997; Levinson, 2001; Macias, 1992). However, the studies I have found through literature searches were conducted primarily in rural sites (Bryan & McLaughlin, 2005; Candela, 1997; Levinson, 2001; Macias, 1992). Bryan and McLaughlin (2005) argue that there is a gap in studies that portray the Mexican school system in semi-urban and/or urban areas. They argue that there is a need for further research because immigrant students who are coming to the U.S. come not only from

Mexican rural areas, but also from urban and semi-urban areas, particularly those located in the border area of the United States and Mexico.

Another common issue in literature on Mexican-origin immigrant student schooling is that many studies focus on the perspectives of middle school and high school students. Therefore, there is a need for studies that analyze the educational experiences of younger children attending elementary schools. Since students' school experiences can be shaped at a very young age, it is of vital importance to describe and explain immigrant children's experiences at the elementary level. Schools need to be able to identify as early as possible factors that can help prepare immigrant children for academic success and protect them from being at risk (Igoa, 1995).

Most of the literature I reviewed also concentrated on students' experiences either before immigration or after immigration, and only Zuñiga and Hamman (2009) had made a comparison among school contexts by interviewing students after they had returned from the U.S. to their places of origin. Macias (1990) argued that

> the immigrant educational experience in the United States has rarely been examined in its full context as a transition from one constellation of related phenomena – schooling that takes place within a particular family, institutional, social, and cultural environment – to another, nonequivalent set of experiences in the United States (p.292).

Macias' (1990) argument still rings true twenty years later, as little research that examines contrastively the full scope of student transitions from Mexican to U.S. schools exist. Macias (1990), Gonzalez (2001), Igoa (1999), and Zuñiga and Hamman (2009) also make visible that United States' educators and policy makers do not know much about

immigrant students. Therefore, educational decisions in United States' schools are taking place with little research evidence (Macias, 1990), particularly research that takes into account student perspectives and examines their schooling experiences (Bryan & McLaughlin, 2005).

The purpose of this research study is to contribute to this gap in literature by examining perspectives of the children who had moved to an elementary school in Ollin, Texas, U.S. from public urban schools in Yolizli, Tamaulipas, Mexico. By interviewing children, their teachers, and parents, I seek to uncover aspects of schooling shaping recent immigrant children's social and academic experiences at Ollin South Elementary, a public elementary school located on the U.S. side of the Mexican-American border.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH DESIGN AND LOGIC OF INQUIRY

This study examines how recent immigrant children arriving to the U.S. with previous formal schooling in Yoliztli, Mexico, describe their schooling experiences in an Ollin public elementary school. In seeking to understand children's schooling experiences in Ollin as compared to Yoliztli, I examine how students compared their prior experiences in Yoliztli with the existing practices in their current school at Ollin South Elementary.

In this chapter I first explain the theoretical principles of ethnographic research, and how each of these principles were employed in my study. I continue the chapter by explaining the site and participant selection, the ethical issues, and the position and role of the researcher. I also explain the methods used for collecting research records and constructing data, and the different levels of analysis constituting the logic of inquiry. At the end I provide a summary of the chapter.

Rationale for Adopting an Ethnographic Perspective

To gain understanding about the students' perspectives of their schooling experiences, I adopted an ethnographic perspective which enabled me to situate student discourse in the larger social, cultural, educational, and family contexts that influence the children's schooling experiences (Green, Dixon, & Zaharlick, 2003). An ethnographic perspective helped me uncover immigrant children's schooling experiences before and after immigrating. An ethnographic perspective was vital to my study since my main research objective was to gain an understanding of school experiences on both sides of

the border from the children's point of view. I contrastively analyzed how immigrant children's school experiences have changed compared to their pre-emigration school. I conducted semi-structured interviews with students, parents, and teachers, and also examined textual materials as well as other artifacts referenced by the participants.

By examining what children say about the cultural school contexts, and how they juxtapose their past and present schooling through semi-structured interviews, I make visible factors that influence recent immigrant children's educational experiences and successes at Ollin South Elementary school. In adopting an ethnographic approach, I obtained an understanding of immigrant children's schooling perspectives, tacit knowledge, and subjective understandings from the insider's or emic perspective (Anderson-Levitt, 2002).

Three Principles of Ethnographic Perspective

In this study I adopted an ethnographic perspective to study immigrant children's views about their experiences and cultural practices of their schools. Ethnographic perspective is a focused approach of doing research without the extensive immersion in the field; however, the focused approach is guided by the anthropological principles of ethnographic research (Green et al., 2003). Three principles of ethnography, proposed by Green and colleagues (2003) guided my study. These principles include: studying cultural practices, undertaking contrastive analyses, and adopting a holistic perspective. I used these principles to examine recent immigrant children's descriptions of their experiences at Ollin South after moving from Yoliztli.

Studying Cultural Practices

Cultural practices are roles and relationships, norms and expectations, rights and obligations (Collins & Green, 1992) that members construct to determine membership in a social group. Collins and Green (1992) argue that life in school becomes patterned as students and teachers "construct a common language and set of experiences that influence their interpretations of future actions and interactions" (p. 72). Cultural practices in school involve teacher-student and student-student relationships, as well as particular ways of using and understanding curriculum.

Ethnographers seek to understand and describe cultural practices from the emic perspective of participants, giving their accounts primary status (Walford, 2008). Spradley (1980) explained that an ethnographer seeks to analyze the meaning participants give to an event, actions, or cultural artifacts from a native's (insider's) point of view. The goal in ethnographic work, however, is "not to go 'native' but to be able to make visible the cultural practices and principles of practice to those who are not members of the group that is being analyzed" (Green, et al., 2003, p. 153).

My study sought to identify cultural practices at Ollin South and in Yoliztli schools by analyzing what the children described as common activities, knowledge, and expectations constructed in a particular school context. Such practices were examined from the children's point of view by talking to them about their school experiences at Ollin South as compared to their school experiences in Yoliztli. Teachers' and parents' points of view were also analyzed to expand and explain the responses given by students regarding Ollin andYoliztli schools. The focus on cultural practices from participant's

points of view made apparent what is important to students about their school experiences.

Contrastive Perspective

Another principle of ethnographic perspective requires adopting a contrastive perspective to uncover cultural knowledge. A contrastive perspective enables researchers to examine varios sources of data and different points of view to construct holistic representations of cultural practices and insider perspectives about those practices. Two of the ways to accomplish a contrastive perspective in ethnographic work involve triangulating data, methods, perspectives and theory (Corsaro, 1981, Green et al., 2003) and adopting a cultural relevance principle that involves setting aside ethnocentrism (Green, Skukauskaite, & Baker, in press) to make visible emic perspectives and practices.

Contrastive perspective involves triangulating perspectives, data, methods and/or theory (Green et al., 2003). Ethnographers use different data collection methods, including interviews, participant observation, classroom artifacts, and other documents to identify multliple points of view about cultural processes. By triangulating varied sources and information, ethnographers construct complex holistic representations of phenomena under investigation (Green et al., 2003; Green et al., in press). In my study I employed the contrastive perspective of triangulating by collecting multiple sources of data, including observations, curriculum documents, and children's drawings in addition to the primary data collection method of interviewing. I also triangulated perspectives of children, parents, and teachers in order to uncover and explain children's views of their schooling experiences at Ollin South as compared to Yoliztli. By triangulating different

perspectives of students, parents, and teachers, I built a holistic representation of the complexity of processes and practices that children experience when moving between different school contexts.

Contrastive perspective also involves using the principle of contrastive relevance. Contrastive relevance means setting aside the researcher's ethnocentric view, bracketing outsider knowledge, judgement and perspectives (Heath, 1982; Green et al. in press), and analyzing what perspectives and meanings participants construct about their everyday lives (Walford, 2008). In conducting this study I set aside my ethnocentric perspectives that stemed from my experiences as an immigrant from Yolitzli and as a school administrator within the Ollin school district. When children talked about their schooling experiences at Ollin South, I focused on their perspectives and used their continuous comparisons between Ollin and Yoliztli to construct representations of their schooling experiences in the two countries. Following the children's descriptions, I went to Yoliztli to conduct observations and to collect documents about the Yolitzli schooling practices that were mentioned in the children's interviews. In this way, rather than relying on my own experiences, knowledge, and assumptions of Yolitzli schools, I followed the children's lead and gave their accounts priority, seeking to understand and represent what the children emphasized about their schools.

An additional way of setting aside ethnocentrism and focusing on insider perspectives in my study involved using different levels of analysis. I was able to use the contrastive perspective in identifying topics and sub topics children, their teachers and parents revealed as important in their interviews. Through multiple levels of analysis I provided evidence for immigrant children's perspectives about their school experiences at

Ollin South and in Yoliztli. The different levels of analysis to be discussed later in this chapter included the transcription of interviews, identification of topics and subtopics, and the cross-referencing of the topics among school contexts.

By focusing on children's perspectives and by triangulating their perspectives with those of adults, I was able to construct explanations of how the challenges students faced in the new school related to similarities and differences between their new and prior school experiences.

Holistic Perspective

An ethnographic perspective also requires analyses of part-whole relationships to construct a holistic representation of insider accounts of their experiences and cultural practices. Green et al. (2003) states that analyses need to consider how the individual parts relate to the whole; however, what constitutes a part or a whole is dependent on the unit of analysis of the phenomena being studied (Evertson & Green, 1986; Green et al., in press). A view of one participant can be a part of a larger representation of cultural practices of a social group. The whole can also be one interview, whose different questions constitute parts about specific practices and perspectives. One student as a unit of analysis can be viewed as part of the larger representation of multiple students' point of view (Castanheira et al, 2001). Alternately, one student can also be viewed as a whole, with parent and teacher views constituting parts of understanding the students' experiences. Ethnographers adopt a holistic perspective to understand how different aspects of cultural knowledge relate to each other and form a larger representation of emic understandings of cultural knowledge and practices.

In my study, I analyzed the first interview with a teacher to identify possible topics relating to recent immigrant students' experiences. The topics from this first interview became initial parts in my construction of understanding of participant's views about children's experiences at Ollin South as compared to their prior schooling in Yolitzli. Each subsequent interview with children, their parents, and other teachers, added more parts and perspectives to the construction of a larger understanding of what children experienced as they adapted to the Ollin school after the immigration from Yolitzli. Each interview became a part of a whole set of interviews while observations, documents, and children's drawings constituted additional parts of the purposeful data set (Baker, Green & Skukauskaite, 2008) constructed for this study. By using a part-whole approach to examine topics revealed by multiple participants through multiple data sources, I constructed a holistic representation of children's schooling experiences at Ollin South as compared to prior schooling in Yolitzli.

Site and Participant Selection

This research study was conducted at one of the 36 elementary public schools of the Ollin Independent School District. This school district is located on the U.S. side of the Mexico-U.S. border, on the most southern point of Texas. The elementary school is located in a low socio-economic Hispanic dominant neighborhood. All of the 534 students enrolled in this school belong to families that are economically disadvantaged, 98.9% are Hispanic, and 72.1% of the student population is considered at risk of failure as determined by the 2009-2010 Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS) report, posted by the Texas Education Agency (TEA, 2010). Even though the school has a

97.4% annual attendance rate, there is still a high mobility rate, with 25.8% of the students enrolling and withdrawing at least once during the school year, which is above the 18% state average percentage. The student-teacher ratio averages around 15:1, and the average classroom size is 22 students (TEA, 2010).

During the 2009-2010 school year, the campus went through the process of changing the late-exit bilingual program to an early-exit transitional program, with English language learners required to acquire English as fast as possible. English language learners still received support through sheltered instruction which is intended to meet the linguistic needs of the English language learners. In the same school year, the campus received an Exemplary status rating for the first time ever. An exemplary status means that all students meet state goals, which include scoring 90% or above in the state assessment Texas Assessment and Knowledge Skills (TAKS). Students were able to take the TAKS in English and Spanish, depending on their language proficiency.

According to Chapter 29, Subchapter B of the Texas Education law, English language learners are entitled to receive instruction and to be assessed in their native language if there are 20 students enrolled in the same grade level. Native language instruction can be provided throughout the elementary grades, as long as the language proficiency assessment committee determines the need for language support in the students' native language. Based on this law, school districts can choose from different models of bilingual programs that range from an early exit transition from the students' native language to English, to a late-exit transition. At Ollin South, English language learners went from a late-exit transition bilingual program and receiving most of their instruction in Spanish to primarily all English instruction in the early-exit program.

For this study I purposefully selected children who are currently categorized as English language learners and also as recent immigrants enrolled at Ollin South elementary school. According to Chapter 101 of the Sub-commissioner's rules (2001), a student is considered a recent immigrant within his or her first three school years of enrollment in the United States' schools. Out of 80 students classified as recent immigrants at Ollin South, I used purposeful sampling to select ten students to participate in this study. The criteria for participation included being recent immigrant students who were previously enrolled at a school in Yoliztli, and who were also enrolled in first through fifth grade at Ollin South Elementary for the 2009-2010 school year. Besides being enrolled at different grade levels, students were also at different years post immigration. These ten students all met the criteria for participation. Table 3.1 provides a description of each student's classification according to the grade level in which they were enrolled, their age, and the years of immigration.

As represented in table 3.1, participant students' ages range from six to eleven years old. I included at least one participant from each grade level starting from first grade up to fifth grade, with the exception of third grade. The guardians of the only recent immigrant child enrolled in third grade did not grant permission to participate in the study. Seven out of ten participants were in their first year of enrollment in the U.S.

Even though my study's main goal was to understand children's perspectives about their schools, I decided to interview the participant students' teachers as well as their parents or legal guardians.

Table 3.1

Student Classification

Participant	Grade level	Age	Years in the U.S.
Janeth	1st	6	1
Mauricio	1st	6	1
Israel	2nd	7	1
Saul	2nd	7	1
Luna	2nd	7	1
Gudelio	4th	9	2
Karla	4th	9	1
Patricia	4th	9	1
Juliana	4th	10	2
Ana	5th	11	3

I based my decision to include parents and teachers based on the premise that the "fieldwork phase is complete only when abilities to identify other kinds of informants relevant to the research objectives have been exhausted" (Gold, 1997, as cited by Walford, 2008, p.8). One teacher from first, second, third, and two from fourth grade joined the study. I also interviewed six parents.

The participant teachers informed me about their background through informal conversations. All five teachers interviewed in this study hold a teaching degree and an elementary bilingual teaching certificate. Their teaching experience ranges from two to fourteen years, all in the United States. Even though three of the five teachers were born in Yoliztli, they had all their college degrees from the United States. The other two of the five teachers were born in the U.S. At the time of the study, the campus required them to

teach reading in the students' native language and the content areas in English. All of them are fully bilingual as determined by the Texas Educator Certification System, and they are able to teach their students all of the subjects in Spanish.Table 3.2 represents information about teacher backgrounds.

Table 3.2

Teachers' Background

Teacher	Degree/Teaching Certificate	City born	Age at immigration	Yrs teaching exp.
Mrs. Perez	Bachelors in Interdisciplinary St Bil. 1-6	Yoliztli	5	14
Mrs. Rodriguez	Bachelors in Interdisciplinary St Bil. 1-8	Yoliztli	15	9
Miss Vásquez	Bachelors in Interdisciplinary St. Bil EC-4	Yoliztli	15	7
Miss Sánchez	Bachelors in Interdisciplinary St. Bil EC-4	Ollin	N/A	2
Ms. Fernández	Bachelors in Interdisciplinary St. Bil EC-4	Ollin	N/A	3

I also included interviews with parents of the children in order to gain wider, possibly different, perspectives on students' descriptions of their experiences. Table 3.3 provides information about the parents. As represented in Table 3.3, parent ages range for 31 to 40 years. Two parents have college degrees, one has taken college courses, two have high school education while three completed only middle school level education. Two mothers and one father hold temporary jobs, while only one of the parents, Janeth's father, has a contract-based job.

Table 3.3

Parents' Background

Student's Parents	Age	Education	Occupation	Temporary	Contract
Janeth's mother	31	BIE Industrial Engineer	Substitute teacher	√	
Janeth's father	34	BS in computer science	Factory line manager		√
Israel's mother	42	Middle School	Housewife	N/A	N/A
Luna's mother	32	Middle School	Housewife	N/A	N/A
Gudelio's mother	40	Middle School	Housewife	N/A	N/A
Patricia's mother	30	High school	Housewife	N/A	N/A
Patricia's father	32	High school	Migrant worker	√	
Karla's mother	35	Some college level courses	Clerk at an Import/Exp Company	√	

Ethical issues

The study was approved by the University's Institutional Review Board and protection of human subjects was ensured through informed consent, voluntary participation, and focus on schooling, not immigration experiences. I ensured that all of the people invited to participate in the study knew that their participation was voluntary and that pseudonyms would be used for all participants, their schools and the towns.

Position and Role of the Researcher

I currently work at one of the elementary schools in Ollin, Texas. Many of the children currently enrolled in the school where I work come from Yoliztli, Mexico. Educators on campus seek to better understand immigrant students in order to provide

educational opportunities available to native students. As an instructional facilitator, my responsibility is to help teachers on campus to develop teaching practices that will lead to success to all students. My goal for this study was to understand immigrant children's experiences in order to be able to inform teachers and the larger field about immigrant student needs and ways of providing adequate educational opportunities for immigrant and other students.

Even though I immigrated to the United States from the same town as the participant children in my study, I did it as an adult, and therefore, I do not assume that my schooling experiences in Yoliztli are similar to the children who participated in the study. Because of the differences in my perspective on schooling in Yoliztli decades ago and my entry into the United States as an adult, I started the study with an etic or outsider perspective, seeking to gain students' insider perspectives on their educational experiences. Corsaro (1981) states that in order to understand children's perspectives, "researchers must free themselves from adult conceptions of children's activities and enter the child's world as both observer and participant" (p. 151). Through analysis of the students' perspectives of their schooling experiences on both sides of the border, I had a chance to challenge my own views about schools in Yoliztli. I was able to recognize that my school experiences in Yoliztli were different because I went to a private not a public school, whereas all participants in my study had attended public elementary schools. Also, even though I work in the same school district in which I am conducting the study, I had not previously paid attention to what recent immigrant children say about their schooling experiences. I am familiar with the school where the study took place, yet I was unaware of what children expressed about their school experiences.

Methods for Data Collection

In seeking to uncover how recent immigrant students understand and describe their new experiences at Ollin South elementary, I conducted semi-structured and open-ended interviews (Patton, 2002). In order to attain an emic perspective I interviewed recent immigrant students individually twice, at the beginning and at the end of the second semester of the 2009-2010 school year. Teachers and parents were interviewed once during the time of this study. According to Peshkin (2001), by having more than one interview at different times, the researcher "can take account of the non-static nature of events and people" (p. 243). Peshkin (2001) also states that in order to be fair to the participants and to seek more holistic representations of participants' perspectives, researchers need to interact with them over time.

Three interview protocols (see appendices A, B, and C) were created for this study. The first protocol is the student version, the second protocol is for the parents, and the third protocol is for the teachers. The student interview protocol asked students about their school experiences in Yoliztli and at Ollin South, what they liked and disliked the most about their schools, the way they made friends in both settings, as well as the things they would change. The parent version asked parents about their understanding of their children's educational experiences, as well as about the feedback they have been getting from their children in reference to school. The teacher version of the interview protocol asked teachers about their views of their recent immigrant students, how they help them succeed in school, and what they see as students' challenges and successes in school.

I used semi-structured interviews (Brenner, 2006) for the first interview and open-ended interviews for consecutive interviews (Patton, 2002). Brenner (2006) states that by

conducting semi-structured interviews, the researcher gives the interviewee the space to express meaning in his or her own words yet maintains the focus on the topic and purpose of the interview. In the semi-structured interviews I allowed children to bring up other topics and followed the participants' lead. During the interviews, the first questions focused on school experiences at Ollin South. The subsequent questions focused on school experiences in Yoliztli. Even though the interview questions were designed to make visible the children's experiences at Ollin South first, the participant students immediately expressed the things they missed from Yoliztli. By posing questions about the Ollin and the Yolitzli schools, I was able to elicit student comparisons about the cultural patterns of the two schools. For the subsequent set of interviews, I used open-ended questions to develop an interview guide (Patton, 2002) which outlined topics to be explored with each interviewee.

For the second interview with the students I also added photo-elicitation strategies that enhanced my participants' narrations of their school experiences in both Yoliztli and Ollin. Harper (2002) argued that images can bring deeper elements of human consciousness compared to words. Using visuals can be less stressful for the participants than only answering interview questions (Harper, 2002). This technique enabled me to elicit a broader range of responses from the children.

I took pictures of children's pre-emigration schools in Yoliztli and showed them to the students in order to tap into their memories. Once they reviewed the pictures, I asked students to draw their schools. When the students finished their drawings, I asked them to tell me anything they remembered about their previous school setting. By having the drawings in front of the child and the interviewer, the participant children were able

to compare and contrast what they drew. By using spoken (interviews) and visual (pictures, drawings) representations of children's schooling experiences, I was able to develop a better understanding of my participants' knowledge and experiences in the two school contexts.

I generated all the data for this study during the second semester of the 2009-2010 school year. I originally planned to write field notes while audio recording the interviews, but I was not able to take field notes since the participants were distracted every time I tried to write during the interview. All participants needed the eye contact in order to continue speaking during the interviews. By audio recording the interviews without writing notes, I was able to maintain the interviewee attention and continue the interview interaction with the interviewees.

I collected audio records from interviews through iDicto, a digital recording application from my personal iPhone. I archived digital audio records as .aif audio files through Quick Time Pro, an audio software. I archived transcripts as Microsoft Word and Excel files. I stored all these files on a password-protected laptop, a USB drive, and on iDrive, an online application system used to store files. I stored other textual materials provided by student or adult participants in a locked filing cabinet in my house.

One of the choices I had to make in working with audio records was the choice of language for transcribing and analysis. All of the student and parent interviews were conducted in Spanish, and the teachers' interviews were conducted in the language they chose. Some of the teachers preferred to respond in Spanish, while others preferred to speak English. All interviews were transcribed in the same language they were conducted in order to conserve the words of my respondents as authentically as possible. The

analysis of the data was also in the same language of the interviews. I only translated into English the Spanish interview segments which I used in this dissertation for analysis and representation purposes.

Timeline

The first interviews took place at the beginning of the second semester of the 2009-2010 school year. The follow-up interviews with the photos of the participant's pre-emigration schools were conducted between May and June, after the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS), and before the end of the school year. By waiting until May for the second interview, I avoided stress related issues in my participants who are enrolled in a grade level that is required to take the state assessment in March and April (see Table 3.4 for further details on the timeline).

Table 3.4

Timeline

Time	Place	Process
January 2010	Ollin	Gathering records 1st Interviews with children
February 2010	Ollin	Gathering records: children, parent & teacher interviews
March 2010	Ollin and Yoliztli	Gathering records: Parent and teacher interviews Photo collection
April 2010	University	Data analysis (Transcriptions)
May 2010	Ollin	Gathered 2nd set of interviews with children End of data collection
Sept/Oct 2010	University/Home	Data analysis and dissertation writing
March 2011	University	Final draft/Defense/Revisions

In order to get the pictures for photo elicitation purposes, I visited the participants' pre-emigration schools during the spring break week. That gave me enough time to be ready with the pictures by the time I conducted the second set of interviews with the students. Parent and teacher interviews were conducted at different times between the students' first and second interviews.

Logic of Inquiry

Spradley (1980) states that any type of analysis involves a way of thinking. "It refers to the systematic examination of something to determine its parts, the relationship among parts, and their relationship to the whole. Analysis is a search for patterns" (Spradley, 1980, p. 85). Spradley (1980) explains that in order to describe participants' cultural behavior, artifacts, and knowledge, the researcher must find the patterns that are embedded in the gathered data. In my study, I examined interview, observation, documentary and visual records to identify patterns of the school experiences of immigrant students.

I constructed four levels of analysis in order to construct a holistic representation of the schooling experiences identified by the participants of the study. All the analyses conducted in the study were based on an inductive approach oriented to the identification of topics, patterns, and themes from the data. "Inductive analysis means that the patterns and themes of analysis come from the data; they emerge out the data rather than being imposed on them prior to data collection and analysis" (Patton, 1980, p. 306).

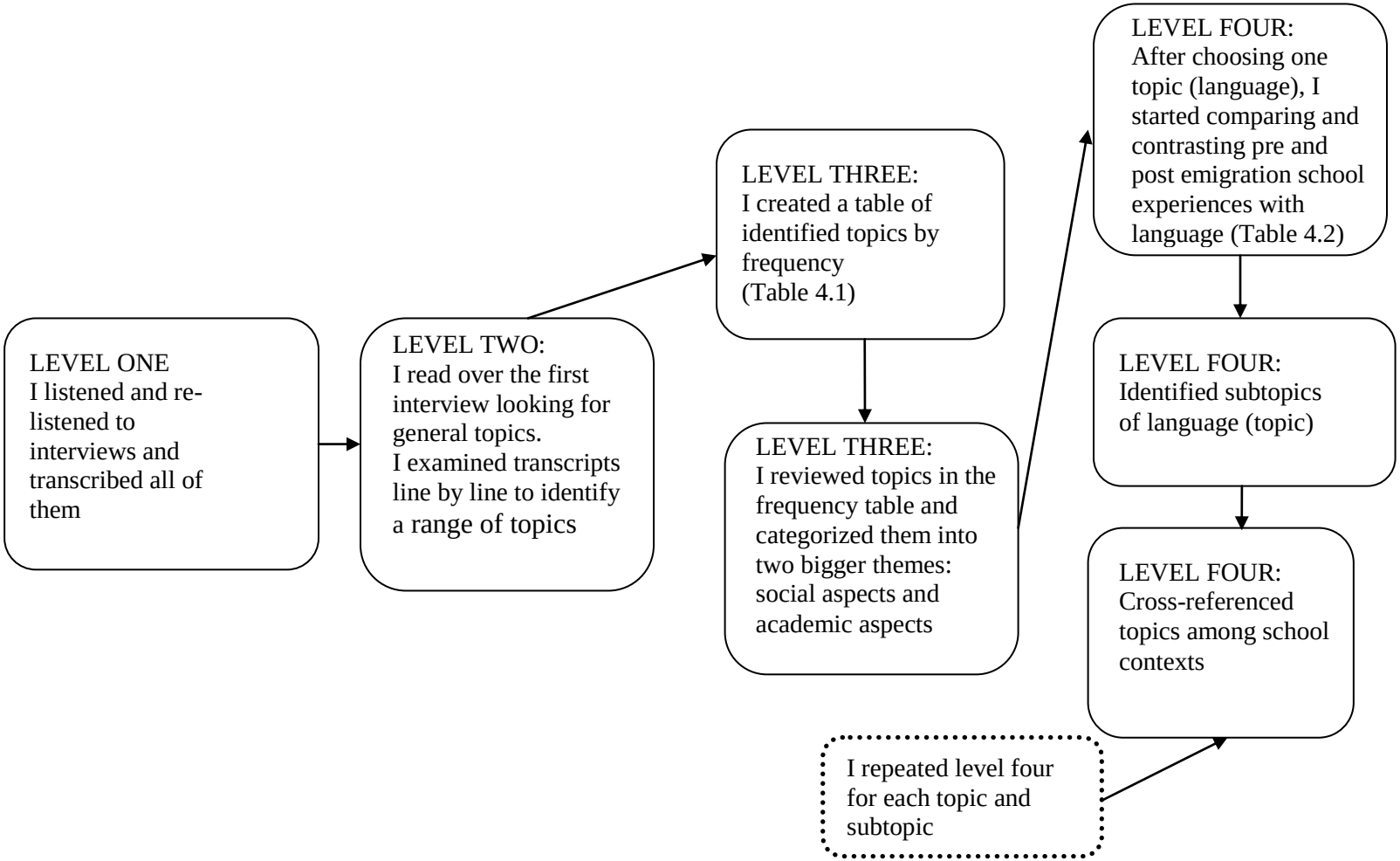
Figure 3.1 summarizes the different levels of analysis employed to answer the research question. The first and second level of analysis involved one major step each. In

these levels I analyzed transcripts to identify a range of topics participants mentioned. The third level of analysis involved two steps to identify the main topics and themes. The fourth level of analysis included three steps. The first step involved transcribing interviews to capture different topics that emerged during the conversations. For the second step I identified topics discovered in the analyses. In level three I reviewed topics through a frequency table and categorized them into themes that included the social aspects and academic aspects. Through the last step of cross-referencing topics among school contexts, I constructed an explanation of how school experiences in the two schools were significant to the participants. I was also able to identify subtopics of each of the topics. I repeated the logic of level four for each subsequent topic and subtopics. The topics identified under academic aspects were language and school curriculum. The subtopics derived from the topic of curriculum were math mechanics, reading approach, and theme versus isolated instruction. The sub-topics derived from the topic of language was further divided into language as a means of communication, language as a way of accesing instruction, and language as a support factor at home. The topics under social aspects were recreational time, peer support, and friends. A subtopic derived from the topic of recreational time was recess versus physical education.

Analysis Level One

The first step of the analysis was to transcribe all interviews. Green, Franquiz, and Dixon (1997) argue that analysis begins with transcribing and that transcripts are interpretive constructions. Lapadat and Lindsay (1999) emphasize that transcribing enables the researcher to develop initial insights about their data.

Figure 3.1 Levels of Analyses



They state, “Analysis will take place and understanding will be derived through the process of constructing a transcript by listening and re-listening to the audio recordings of the interviews” (Lapadat & Lindsay, 1999, p.82).

According to Lapadat and Lindsay (1999), researchers make choices about what to transcribe and how to represent the audio records in text format. These choices should include how to represent the context and content of the interview in the transcript (Lapadat & Lindsay, 1999; Ochs, 1979). Transcribing is a key part of analysis since it allows the researcher to pay close attention to what the interviewee is expressing (Lapadat & Lindsay, 1999).

I first transcribed all interviews (students’, parents’, and teachers’) as a word document by typing blocks of text without breaking the lines. I broke the paragraphs only when the interviewees would pause during the interview. Later I decided to transfer the word document to an excel sheet in order to generate sentence level units. By switching to a sentence level transcription format, I was able to review each sentence in detail and to identify what the participant was expressing through his or her conversation. I transcribed all the interviews in a three column format that included a column for the sentence number, a second column for the questions and/or prompts that were asked by the interviewer, and a third column for the interviewee responses. Table 3.5 represents the transcript format which I used for further analyses.

Table 3.5

First Three Columns of the First Analyzed Interview Transcript

Line	Interviewer	Interviewee
1	Ms. Fernández, how do you perceive these children's experiences, here, in this school?	
2		This year they've been adapting very well to the experiences here in school.

In level one I transcribed the interviews into written form so that I could study the participants' responses in detail. As seen in Table 3.5, Ms. Fernández's interview transcribed into sentence level units allowed me to review each statement as a whole. I was also able to identify what the participant was communicating to me in each sentence. The format used included line breaks for each statement made by the participants as they paused or switched topics. This strategy of breaking statements into separate lines allowed me to understand the constructions of meaning that were taking place.

Analysis Level Two

Following the construction of all transcripts, I skimmed over all the transcripts in order to gather an initial sense of what they were about. Then I started analyzing in detail the transcript of the first interview I gathered for the study, the interview with Ms. Fernández. I started adding columns to the previously created three column format (Table 3.5). I created a column named "ideas signaled" for what I considered to be the most important aspect signaled by the speaker to me as interviewer. For example, Ms. Fernández responded to the question about her opinion on her students' schooling

experiences by saying: *This year they've been adapting very well to the experiences here in school*. The most important part I derived from this sentence was that students were adapting well. I placed this idea in the "ideas signaled" column.

Ms. Fernández started framing her students' school experiences by saying *this year*. To mark the time, I decided to add a column labeled "time frame inscribed." I thought it was going to be an important column to consider since the children might have different experiences according to the time passed after arriving to a new school setting.

Table 3.6

First Six Columns of the First Analyzed Interview Transcript

Interviewer	Interviewee	Ideas signaled	Possible topic	Place	Time frame inscribed
Ms Fernandez, how do you perceive these children's experiences, here, in this school			Adaptation process		this year
	This year they've been adapting very well to the experiences here in school.	students adapting well			

Level two allowed me to see what participants identified as possible topics in relation to my research question "How do recent immigrant children coming with previous formal schooling in Yoliztli describe their schooling experiences in an Ollin public elementary school?" Since participants of the study identified a variety of possible

topics, it was necessary for me to go into a deeper level of analysis and see which topics reoccurred and which ones were only mentioned once or twice by the students.

Analysis Level Three

Once I went over Ms. Fernández's transcript, I found four different possible topics: adaptation, language, peer support, and math. After this first transcript, I then started going over the rest of the transcripts, checking on previously identified topics, as well as looking for new ones. I made a list of all the possible topics identified from the transcripts. I added friends, reading, science, and time to play. I stopped adding new topics once topics started to reoccur. I then created a tally chart (Table 4.1) with topics that occurred more than once, in order to find out which topics reocurred within the interviews. The checkmarks indicate which students made reference to a particular topic. Using Table 3.7, I found that the most reoccurring topics students referred to were time to play, peer support, friends, language, science, and math. Possible topics that were left out because they were just mentioned once were adaptation process and gender issues.

Once I reviewed the topics from the frequency table, I decided that these topics could be categorized into two bigger themes: academic and social aspects. Topics of math and science were clustered and labeled school curriculum, and together with language were considered academic aspects. On the other hand, topics that related to student social interaction were classified as social aspects. Topics of recreational time, peer support, and friends were considered social aspects. I added the top row in Table 3.7 to show these two bigger themes.

Table 3.7

Issues at Ollin South Expressed by Children: Topics by Frequency

		Academic				Social	
	Grade Level	Subject: Language	Curriculum: Science	Curriculum: Math	Recreat. Time	Peer Support	Friends
Janeth	1st			√	√		√
Mauricio	1st						
Israel	1st	√			√		√
Saul	2nd	√		√	√	√	√
Luna	2nd	√			√		
Gudelio	4th	√			√	√	√
Karla	4th	√	√		√	√	
Patricia	4th				√		
Juliana	4th			√			√
Ana	5th	√				√	
		60%	10%	30%	70%	40%	50%

Analysis Level Four

After tallying the different topics and identifying the two major themes represented in Table 3.7, I chose language as one of the most repeated topics that students talked about. In the area of academics, 60% of the students talked about language as an issue in their schooling experiences at Ollin South and in Yoliztli. Many of the students also stated having a hard time with English at Ollin South because they were not exposed to the English language in Yoliztli. Students from Ms. Fernández's class talked about their experience with language at Ollin South. When I analyzed Ms. Fernández's transcripts, I noticed that she narrated some of the things her students had told her about their language experience: *They would do a little bit of English, but it was not the English that she hears here, not like here.* Other teachers also emphasized language as a challenge recent immigrant students faced because immigrant students were not coming with the English proficiency level required at Ollin South. That is when I decided to implement another level of analysis in order to incorporate what the students and the teachers were expressing about their schooling experiences at Yoliztli.

At the fourth level of analysis, I compared what participants said about their experiences in Yoliztli with what I had observed in Yoliztli schools. Since students narrated their schooling experiences as a comparison with their previous schooling experiences, I contrasted what participants said and how they viewed language at Ollin South with what I had previously recorded in my field notes from Yoliztli observations. Table 3.8 is based on analyses of interviews and observations and represents how language is used at Ollin South and in Yoliztli.

This table represents a contrastive analysis of the two school settings, based on what the participants said about their experience with language at Ollin South and what I

had noticed in Yoliztli through observations and artifacts collected. For example, students mentioned having a hard time with English because in Yoliztli they did not receive much instruction in English. I then analyzed a schedule from Yoliztli and confirmed what the student said by noting that English was taught everyday for 40 minutes.

Table 3.8

Language Use between School Contexts

Yoliztli Schools	Ollin South	Language Subtopics
Teaching was in Spanish, with little exposure to English	Teaching is in Spanish and English	Language as a way of accesing instruction
Students knew the language to communicate with others	Students do not know the language	Language as a means of communication
Parents supported their children at home	Parents do not know the language, and consequently are not able to support their children as much as they wish	Language as a support factor at home

By comparing and contrasting the two school settings I identified different aspects of language participants talked about. I added a column to represent those subtopics of language.Through this contrastive analysis I identified subtopics of language: language as a way of accessing instruction, language as a means of communication, and language as a support factor at home. I was now able to see language from different angles (Table 3.8).

In order to examine what students said about each subtopic of language in more depth, I went back through all the transcripts in the order the interviews were conducted. Using the topic of language as my analytic lens, from each transcript I identified all the segments in which student, parent, or teacher participants addressed language issues. In this way I constructed a purposeful data set (Baker, Green, & Skukauskaite, 2008) to analyze language aspects in more depth. I then grouped the segments based on the subtopic of language I had identified through the contrastive analysis of language use between school contexts (Table 3.8). Then from the dataset for each subtopic, I selected particular segments that made visible participant views about each subtopic of language most explicitly. These transcript segments became "telling cases" (Mitchell, 1984, p. 239). According to Mitchell (1984), "telling cases" make visible what has been "previously obscure" (p. 239) or only implicit. The telling cases I selected represent either the unique or the most explict explanations of the language issues for each subtopic. I analyzed each telling case segment by relistening to the audio recording of the interview and re-transcribing the segment in message units (Green & Wallat, 1981). Message units, or "bursts of speech" (Green & Wallat, 1981, p.174) the speaker utters moment-by-moment in the course of communication with the hearer enable the researcher to analyze what is being signaled through each message unit. I determined message units by listening for contextualization cues (Gumperz & Berenz, 1993) on the audio record. The cues that I used to separate the messages included pauses, intonational shifts, topic shifts, and change of speaker. This way of transcribing enabled me to focus on each message to analyze not only what the speaker represented as issues for recent immigrant children, but also how she revealed different actors, actions, and the

consequences for the children (the analysis of this segment is represented in Table 4.2 in the next chapter).

Table 3.9 represents a message unit transcript in which the first column indicates the message unit number and the second column the moment-by-moment discourse of the speaker.

Table 3.9

Message Unit Transcription of a Segment from Ms. Fernández's Interview

Line	Transcript
94	I wanted to ask you
95	but I didn't know if you were going to respond
96	like my teachers in Mexico
97	They will tell me sit down, and just pay attention.
98	If I ask they are going to scold me
99	they were going to get mad at me
100	because I did not know the language
101	I thought you were going to speak all in English
102	and I was so scared because what if I don't understand at all
103	But once I started speaking to her in Spanish
104	she came to me and said
105	Ay ma'am Im so relieved
106	because I thought I was never going to speak to you

After analyzing telling cases for each language subtopic, I returned to the transcripts to identify all segments for the academic aspect of math. I constructed data sets for math, science, and reading and then followed the same logic to construct purposeful data sets for all of the topics of the social aspects of schooling. By constructing purposeful data sets for each subtopic, I was able to identify telling cases which highlighted participant's emic perspectives of the academic and social aspects of schooling recent immigrant children experienced at Ollin South Elementary.

Summary of the Chapter

In this chapter I described the logic of inquiry for the study by presenting ethnographic perspective as a conceptual framework guiding the study. Using ethnographic tools of semi-structured and open-ended interviewing, observations, photo-elicitation, and document analyses, I constructed a dataset for analyzing students' insights about their school experiences in Yoliztli and at Ollin South Elementary.

I also presented the methodology for the study and described the setting, the participants, and the data collection, as well as the analytic procedures. I also revealed the different levels of analysis used to analyze the interviews in order to understand students' experiences and how their previous experiences in Yoliztli shaped their new experiences at Ollin South. In presenting the analytical logic, I briefly discussed how contrasting different data sources and perspectives enabled me to triangulate the findings and develop the two overarching aspects that represent immigrant students' experiences and views. The first theme, academic experiences of school, is analyzed in chapter four, while the second theme, social experiences of school, is presented in chapter five. Chapter six, the final chapter of the dissertation, will bring the two themes together to discuss the study's contributions, implications, and directions for the future.

CHAPTER IV

ACADEMIC ASPECTS OF SCHOOLING

As I explored the question of how do recent immigrant children coming with previous formal schooling in Yoliztli describe their schooling experiences in an Ollin public elementary school, I identified two main aspects of schooling to which children referred as different in Ollin and Yoliztli. The first aspect mentioned by the students was related to academics, and included topics of language and content areas. Language was identified by students but emphasized by parents and teachers.The second aspect that was foregrounded the most by the students was the social aspect of schooling, which included the topics of time to play, friends, and peer support.

Table 4.1 represents the topics identified by students through interviews. I grouped the topics into two bigger themes: social and academic aspects of school. I portrayed the frequency of the students' responses to the interview questions regarding what students like or dislike about Ollin South Elementary school as well as the issues students experienced. I analyzed positive and negative examples of the same topic and I conducted a contrastive analysis of school experiences in both Ollin South and Yoliztli elementary schools.

I represented each of the participant students in order by grade level, from first to fifth grade in the table rows, and the topics constituting each theme in the columns of Table 4.1. I grouped the topics into academic and social aspects of schooling at Ollin South Elementary. The academic aspects that were brought up by children as part of their school experiences at Ollin South Elementary were language and the content areas of math and science. I also added reading as the fourth topic mentioned under academic

aspects. This aspect was mentioned by Miss Sánchez, a fourth grade teacher, as she narrated her views about recent immigrant children's struggling with academic subjects. The social topics were the time students had to play, peer-support, and friends.

Table 4.1

Issues at Ollin South Expressed by Children and a Teacher: Topics by Frequency

		Academic Aspects				Social Aspects		
	Grade Level	Language	Curriculum: Science	Curriculum: Math	Curriculum: Reading	Recre. Time	Peer Support	Friends
Janeth	1st			√		√		√
Mauricio	1st							
Israel	1st	√				√		√
Saul	2nd	√		√		√	√	√
Luna	2nd	√				√		
Gudelio	4th	√				√	√	√
Karla	4th	√	√			√	√	
Patricia	4th					√		
Juliana	4th			√				√
Ana	5th	√					√	
Miss Sánchez	4th				√			
		60%	10%	30%	10%	70%	40%	50%

The checkmarks indicate which student referenced which topic and the bottom row indicates the percentage of children who talked about each particular topic. Table 4.1 shows that for the academic aspect, six out of ten (60%) participants stated that language was an issue, while the other four identified content areas of math and science as areas of concern. On the social aspect, seven out of ten (70%) students expressed that the time they had to play at Ollin South was an issue, followed by five students who mentioned

their friends. Four students mentioned peer support, and one student also discussed the games they played.

Overall, the table represents the major findings that will be covered in this chapter and chapter five. In this chapter I will concentrate on the academic aspects of schooling experiences that were considered by the students, and then I will focus on social aspects in chapter five. I will also bring in both parent and teacher perspectives to expand on what students said.

Academic Aspect One: Language

Studies on education of immigrant students have focused on the challenges students face when immigrating to the U.S. and enrolling in the U.S. schools. Rodriguez et al. (2009) stated that the educational system has provided an unfair education to immigrant students because they have not been taught in a language they can understand. Most of the reasons for immigrant children's failure in the U.S. classrooms have been attributed to language barriers (Rodriguez et al., 2009). Rodriguez et al. (2009) argued that immigrant students have not always received the language support necessary to succed academically, which has been one of the reasons for the students to fall behind.

The interviews I conducted portray children's perspectives on language across educational settings. Recent immigrant children are bringing to the U.S. classrooms a language that is not the school's language. It is important to analyze the students' language experiences at the new school context in order to extend views of language beyond the effects of language programs on immigrant children. As I have presented in Table 3.8, in explaining my logic of inquiry, there are major differences in the way

languages are being used in Yoliztli and at Ollin South. Table 4.2 reiterates Table 3.8 to provide the basis for further analysis of these differences.

Table 4.2/3.8

Language Use Experienced between School Contexts

Yoliztli Schools	Ollin South
• Teaching was in Spanish, with little exposure to EFL	• Teaching is in Spanish and English
• Students know the language	• Students do not know the language
• Parents support their children at home	• Parents do not know the language, and consequently are not able to support their children as much as they wish

Table 3.8/4.2 shows what participants of the study said about language. Students expressed receiving instruction at Ollin South in English and Spanish, while my observations conducted in Yoliztli indicated that instruction was conducted in Spanish. Students also expressed knowing the language in Yoliztli, while at Ollin South they did not know the language. In addition, parents felt they were not able to support their children at Ollin South because they did not know the language of the school, while in Yoliztli they were able to do it because they knew the language of school.

Table 4.2 shows a comparison of how language is experienced by participants in both school settings. Language is signaled by children in two different ways: Language as a way of accessing instruction inside their classrooms, and language as a means of communicating with others. At the same time, parents talk about language in a third way: They see language as a factor inhibiting them from supporting their children at Ollin South.

Language as a Way of Accessing Instruction

Language as a way of accessing instruction is signaled by participants as one of the differences in the school experiences in Yoliztli and at Ollin South. In my observations of schools in Yoliztli, I noticed that the main language of instruction was Spanish, with English being taught as a foreign language. At Ollin South, the students are exposed to both English and Spanish.

While English is the main language of instruction at Ollin South, Spanish is used at school to support the learning of English, with the expectation that recent immigrant students would transition into all instruction in English by their second year. As will be discussed in the rest of the section, not only the use of English, but also the use of Spanish at Ollin South presents a challenge for the children and their parents.

Language in Yoliztli Elementaries

In Yoliztli Spanish was used as the main language of instruction, and English was taught as a foreign language for forty minutes every day. One teacher inYoliztli provided me with a copy of his schedule, which indicated the forty minute period for English every day (see Table 4.3). Given that in Mexico time allotted for different subjects is determined by the government, teachers adhere to the assigned time to teach English.

During my observations in one of the classrooms in Yoliztli, an English teacher came into the regular classroom to teach English to the students. She spoke in Spanish and explained the activity to the students in Spanish. The teacher spoke English only when she asked the children to repeat the personal pronouns out loud in English: I, you, he, she, it, we, you, and they.

Table 4.3

Yoliztli's Fourth Grade Classroom Schedule

	Lunes (Monday)	Martes (Tuesday)	Miercoles (Wednesday)	Jueves (Thursday)	Viernes (Friday)
8:00-9:10 am	Español (Spanish Language Arts)	Educación Física o Revisión de tarea (Physical Education or Homework review)	Español (Spanish Lan guage Arts)	Revisión de tarea (Homework review)	Exploración de la Naturaleza y Sociedad: Geografía (Nature and Society Exploration: Geography)
9:10-9:50 am	Lengua adicional estatal: Inglés (State adopted additional language: English)	Lengua adicional estatal: Inglés (State adopted additional language: English)	Lengua adicional estatal: Inglés (State adopted additional language: English)	Lengua adicional estatal: Inglés (State adopted additional language: English)	Lengua adicional estatal: Inglés (State adopted additional language: English)
9:50-10:30 am	Español (Spanish Language Arts)	Matematicas (Mathematics)	Matematicas (Mathematics)	Escritura (Writing)	Exploración de la Naturaleza y Sociedad: Historia (Nature and Society Exploration: History)
10:30-11:00 am	RECREO (RECESS)				
11:00-11:50 am	Exploración de la Naturaleza y Sociedad: Historia (Nature and Society Exploration: History)	Matematicas (Mathematics)	Formación Cívica y Etica (Civics and Ethics development)	Lectura (Reading)	Formación Civica y Etica (Civics and Ethics development)
11:50-12:30 am	Exploración de la Naturaleza y Sociedad:	Exploración de la Naturaleza y Sociedad:	Dictado (Dictation)	Exploración de la Naturaleza y Sociedad:	Examen (Test)

	Geografia (Nature and Society Exploration: Natural Science)	Ciencias Naturales (Nature and Society Exploration: Natural Science)		Ciencias Naturales (Nature and Society Exploration: Natural Science)	

The teacher read these pronouns from a book and children were asked to repeat them by following the book. She also asked them to memorize the personal pronouns for homework. All the instruction and talk of the English teacher was conducted in Spanish, with English used only to read the pronouns from the book.

In Yoliztli, schools have a morning shift and an afternoon shift. Table 4.3 portrays the morning schedule that starts at 8:00 am and ends at 12:30 pm. The afternoon shift for a different group of students runs from 1:00 pm to 5:30 pm. Classes in Yoliztli classrooms vary every day, with the exception of English, the state adopted additional language. This subject that has been adopted as part of Yoliztli's school curriculum in the last years is offered to students daily.

My observations of the teacher's actions and interactions with students indicated that teaching of English in Yoliztli was isolated from the rest of the curriculum. Teaching an English lesson was surrounded by the Spanish language. The lesson as well as the materials indicated the use of the grammatical-translation method (Kellerman, 1984) for teaching English without integration of subject matter information. Student knowledge of English in Yoliztli schools was dependent on the text and the teacher.

Language at Ollin South Elementary

When the participant children moved to Ollin South, the exposure they previously had to the Spanish and the English languages changed. At Ollin South, the primary language of instruction is English. The students have to use English in a variety of ways. They have to communicate with other children at school, to study academics at their grade levels as well as to communicate with teachers and school personnel. The demands for English language use at Ollin South are both academic and social. Since recent immigrant students' past school experiences in Yoliztli with the English language concentrated on grammar lessons, their knowledge of English is not sufficient to function in the English dominant environment of Ollin South.

In addition to being exposed to English, children at Ollin South are also exposed to Spanish. At Ollin South, teachers are required to follow the district's early transitional model for English language learners. According to the Texas Education Code Chapter 29, teachers are required to provide native language support and use strategies that make content comprehensible for English language learners. One of the strategies is using Spanish to support English instruction.

Once students start developing not only the basic conversational skills, but also the academic English, then teachers start transitioning students to receive all instruction in English. The following segment of the transcript from Ms. Fernández's interview illustrates how she uses language as well as how she strategically transitions her students into a second language:

> *The Spanish, I'm only giving it in the content areas. Since we tested already in the state, now they are going to receive it in English as well. The science, the health, the spelling, everything else they got it in Spanish, but now they are transitioning. They still get it in English, but I'll give a side by side in Spanish so they can start putting the words together.*

Ms. Fernández explained which language she used for the subjects she taught in fourth grade, and the changes that she made once students received the state assessment. She indicated that she started the school year providing reading instruction in Spanish. Later, once students have taken the reading state assessment, Ms. Fernández started transitioning them into English. She emphasized that even when she conducts her lessons in English, she still provides the Spanish language support and uses different strategies in order to make content comprehensible for her students.

As previously mentioned, fourth grade teachers switch to teaching all subjects in English once the students take the state assessment TAKS in April.

As represented in Table 4.4, at the beginning of the year teachers start teaching reading in the students' native language, while the rest of the content areas are taught in English. Students are exposed for an hour and a half to math and they alternate math every other day with science. They also receive spelling and grammar for 45 minutes through an English as a second language approach. A 45 minute period is assigned daily for pullouts that include students going to the library, the computer laboratory, the art class, or staying with the teacher for health and writing subjects.

Table 4.4 portrays Ms. Fernández's fourth grade schedule at the beginning of the school year in August.

Table 4.4

Ollin South Fourth Grade Classroom Schedule

Time	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
8:00 am – 8:15 am	Announcements / Accelerated Reader Program / Journal Writing				
8:15 am – 9:45 am	Science	Math	Math / Science	Math	Science
9:45 am – 11:15 am	Reading / S.S. (Spanish)	Reading (Spanish)	Reading / S.S (Spanish)	Reading (Spanish)	Reading / S.S. (Spanish)
11:15 am – 11:30 am	Spelling / Grammar (ESL)				
11:30 am – 12:00 pm	Lunch				
12:00 pm – 12:30 pm	Spelling / Grammar (ESL)				
12:30 pm – 1:15 pm	Library (Pullouts)	Computers (Pullouts)	Health	Art (Pullouts)	Writing
1:15 pm – 2:00 pm	Physical Education				
2:00 pm – 3:00 pm	Writing				
3:00 pm – 3:15 pm	Copy Homework in Planner / Dismissal				

Like the teachers, participant students also expressed their experience with language at Ollin South. Students noticed they were able to use Spanish whenever they did not understand or did not know a word in English. In response to my question of what has been the hardest in the school, Karla immediately answered *English*. When I asked her what she did in order to try to do better in school by keeping up with the teacher's assignment, Karla stated that she used her knowledge of Spanish to translate words into English. She said: *Es que entiendo pocas palabras, y las que no me sé las pongo en español* (It's because I understand few words, and those that I don'know I put them in Spanish). Karla indicated she used her strategy of drawing on her knowledge of Spanish to understand English in school. This strategy enabled her to understand tasks or stories

even without knowing all the words in English. Karla made a concurrent translation of the words that she did not know in order to make sense of the complete story.

By being aware that teachers know their native language, immigrant students like Karla can develop strategies that enable them to keep up with the lesson, regardless of the language of instruction. In the next segment of the interview with Ms. Fernández, the teacher portrayed how one of her students reacted when the student noticed the teacher knew how to speak Spanish. By speaking the students' native language, Ms. Fernández created an opportunity to develop a student-teacher relationship. She also established the communication process necessary for students to access instruction in the classroom.

In analyzing the transcript, I constructed columns for actors, actions, context, consequences, and causes. I created columns in order to understand what the teacher said about her conversation with the student. I needed to separate the actions from the actors since the teacher narrated what the student said.

In Table 4.5 Ms. Fernández narrated the interaction she had with one of her students. She explained how the student approached her to express the need to talk to the teacher (line 94) but the student did not know how the teacher was going to respond (line 95). The student's need of asking the teacher but not knowing what to expect at Ollin South is shaped by the actions of the teachers student had in Yoliztli, described by the student in lines 96 through 97. In lines 96 through 97 the student talks about her teachers in Mexico. The student did not know how Ms. Fernández would respond (line 95) if she would ask something (line 95) because in Yoliztli the teachers would tell the student to *sit down and just pay attention* (line 97). The student is drawing on her prior experiences in Yoliztli (lines 96 through 97) to develop particular expectations for Ollin South.

Table 4.5

Segment of Ms. Fernández's Interview

Line	Transcript	Actor	Action/expectation	Context	Consequences	Cause
94	I wanted to ask you	I (student)	Wanted to ask M.F.	Ollin South		
95	but I didn't know if you were going to respond	I (student)	Didn't know If MF would respond	Ollin South		
96	like my teachers in Mexico.	My teachers		Yoliztli		
97	They will tell me sit down, and just pay attention.	They (students' teachers)	Tell me sit down, pay attention	Yoliztli		
98	If I ask they are going to scold me,	I	If I ask	Ollin South	They will scold me	
99	they were going to get mad at me				Get mad	
100	because I did not know the language.	I				Didn't know the language
101	I thought you were going to speak all in English,	I	Thought you were going to speak in English	Ollin South		
102	and I was so scared	I			Was scared	
103	because what if I don't understand at all.					I don't understand
104	But once I started speaking to her in Spanish	I (teacher)	Start speaking in spanish	Ollin South		
105	she came to me and said				Student came	(once I started speaking)
106	Ay ma'am I'm so relieved	I (student)	Am relived	Ollin South	relieved	
107	because I thought I was never	I (student)	Thought I wasn't	Ollin South		(teacher speaking

	going to speak to you		going to speak to you			in Spanish)
108	And I said why not?	I (teacher	Said (asked)	Ollin South		
109	We have bilingual students here…	We (school)		Have bilingual students		
110	and I know Spanish too.	I (teacher)		Know Spanish		
111	Yo también sé español	I (teacher)		Know Spanish		
112	so don't worry about it.				Don't worry (to the students)	(bilingual students; Teacher knows Spanish)
113	Im going to talk to you in Spanish	I (teacher)	Going to talk in Spanish			
114	and whatever you need	You (student)	Need			
115	you let me know	You (student)	Let me know			
116	and I'm going to help you, so	I (teacher)			Will help you	
117	From that day on she felt confident,	She (student)			Felt confident	
118	and she was able				Was able	
119	and she was so willing				Was willing	
120	because					(Teacher actions): in talking to the student; and speaking Spanish
121	she	She (student)			(would do)	
122	whatever I would ask from her	I (teacher)	Ask of her			
123	Even if she did not know how to do it,	She (student)	Did not know how to do it			
124	she will try	She (student)	Try			

125	And that motivated her	Her (student)	
126	and this year now she's speaking a lot more	She (student)	Speaking a lot more
127	You can have a conversation with her	You (anybody) Her (student)	Have a conversation
128	and she will speak to you in English.	She (student) You (anybody)	Speak in English

Her prior experience with Yoliztli teachers led her to believe that teachers at Ollin South were going to scold her for asking a question in class.The student shows how her prior experiences influence her expectations for consequences at Ollin South. Based on her prior experience at Yoliztli, she expects that *if I ask* (line 98), the consequences will be teachers scolding her (line 98) and getting mad (line 99). The student expects these consequences to be due to her not knowing the English language (line 100) at Ollin South. Then the student continues talking to Ms. Fernández and shows how those prior experiences in Yoliztli are shaping her interaction with Ms. Fernández at Ollin South (lines 101 through 103). The student expected the teacher to *speak all in English* (line 101). In line 102 the student says she *was so scared*, attributing this consequence of being scared to her being unable to understand English (line 103).

After narrating the way the student revealed her fear ("scared," in line 102), Ms. Fernández demonstrates the actions she took to help the student. In line 104 Ms. Fernández states she started speaking to the student in Spanish. She inscribes the consequence of this proactive stance toward the student: The student came to talk to her (line 105) and stated she was *so relieved* (line 106) that she could now talk to the teacher. The way the student says *ay ma'am, I'm so relieved* (lines 106) using informal expressions, signals her relationship with Ms. Fernández is different from the ones she held with the teachers in Yoliztli, where the teachers *will tell me to just sit down and pay attention* (line 97).

In this narrated interaction, Ms. Fernández signals that the student has helped her understand the differences in the schooling contexts related to language and interaction. Ms. Fernández also demonstrates that she builds relationships with her students. By

showing that she reaches out to the students by talking to them in Spanish (line 104), the teacher shifts the focus from the language to the importance of interaction.

The teacher states she asked the student *why not?* (line 108) in response to the students' indication of her fear that she would not be able to speak to the teacher (line 107). By explaining that not only does the school have bilingual students (line 109) but that also she as a teacher knows Spanish like the students do (line 110). Ms. Fernández signals a consequence that this environment should enable the student to not worry about language. The teachers at Ollin South provide Spanish native language support to their English language learners. In line 113 Ms. Fernández repeats how she reinforced her message to the student by stating that she will talk to the student in Spanish. In lines 114 and 115 she also indicates that she is available for the student in different ways: *and whatever you need you let me know*. In line 116 she also tells the student that she will help the student.

In lines 117 through 119, the teacher inscribes the consequences of her actions for the student. The student felt confident (line 117), was able (line 118), and was willing (line 119) to try. In lines 120 through 121, the teacher starts providing an explanation for the preceding lines in which she indicated the student was more confident, able and willing. However, she aborts the explanation and continues with the actions of the student. She states the student would do *whatever I would ask from her* (line 122), *she will try* (line 124), and even if she did not know how to do something, she would try (line 123). While the teacher aborted stating the reasons of these actions (line121), the previous narration of this conversation with the student signals that the teacher attributed the change in the student to her own actions of talking to the student and speaking in

Spanish as well as to the school context which includes other bilingual students. The teacher finishes this narration of the conversation with the student by focusing on how teacher actions and school context contributed to the students' active participation at Ollin South. The student is now motivated (line 125). She is also speaking a lot more (line 126), *you can have conversations with her* (line 127), and now she speaks in English (line 128).

Through this narration the teacher showed a variety of supports that contributed to student success. While language is an important factor in helping students interact with the teachers, the teachers' actions of reaching out to the students and the more informal relationship between students and teachers at Ollin South are also helping the student become more successful at Ollin South. In lines 117 through 128, Ms. Fernández inscribes the consequences of the dynamics of interaction with the students: Student is willing to do whatever the teacher asks of her. The students' openness to learn demonstrates how language in the classroom can become a bridge for accessing instruction. At Ollin South, the transition between Yoliztli and Ollin South classrooms is smoother because teachers combine native language support with other strategies to help English language learners. Ms. Fernández expressed the importance of teachers being receptive of what their students are willing to communicate: *If you don't listen you are going to miss what they want, and you are going to miss out when they are asking for help and if you listen they are going to say what they need.* The communication between teachers and students is an important part of the students' school experiences.

Parents also acknowledge that the use of two languages in school helps their children transition into the English environment. In the interview segment represented in

Table 4.6, Karla's mother narrated the experience she and Karla had with language in school. She first presents her daughter's situation: Receiving classes in both English and Spanish (line 109). Karla's mother considers hypothetical consequences by using a subjunctive in line 111: *If you would have all classes in English*. The consequences for giving all classes in English would include *being worse* (110), *crying together every day* (112), or *not making any progress* (113). Even though Karla's mother had expectations that involved her daughter receiving instruction in Spanish, the reality is different. This was a positive experience since she recognizes her daughter had made some progress (line 113) because of being exposed to both English and Spanish in her school.

Like Karla's mother, teachers and students also indicated that the use of native language is helping students succeed at Ollin South. First language support enabled immigrant students at this school to bridge the ways students experienced instruction in Yoliztli and Ollin classrooms. At Ollin South students drew on their native language as part of their study practices. Teachers also used their students' native language for instruction. Through the interviews, participants made visible how important native language was to their school experiences.

Table 4.6 includes a transcript segment, the translation into English, and an actor column which makes visible the person who performed an action. I then included a column for the actions or expectations, with two more columns that included the inscribed hypothetical consequences and causes of the actions.

Table 4.6

Segment of Karla's Mother's Interview

Line	Transcript	Translation	Actor	Action/ Expectation	Hypothetical Consequences	Cause
108	Ahorita de momento	Now at this moment				
109	si te están poniendo clases en espanol y en inglés,	if they are giving you the classes in Spanish and English	They (teachers)	giving classes in English and Spanish		
110	me imagino que estaría peor	I can imagine it could be a lot worse			it could be worse	
111	si tuviera todas las clases en inglés,	if you would have all classes in English				giving all classes in English
112	ahora si lloraríamos juntas todos los dias	now we would have been crying both of us everyday	we (mother and student)		both crying together every day	
113	A lo mejor no hubiera un avance como ahora	Maybe there would not be any progress like it is now			not having any progress	

These positive school experiences were possible because the school supports the recent immigrant students' native language. At Ollin South, reading was taught in Spanish. Even though students transitioned to an environment that aimed for English as the target language, they still heard and used their native language on a daily basis. As the teachers and Karla's mother indicated, the use of the students' native language enabled students to have a smoother transition between classrooms.

Immigrant children viewed language as the way to access instruction in the classroom. Students were able to access instruction by drawing on their native language as part of their independent study practices. They were also able to formulate their own strategies that included concurrent translation into their native language of unknown words, which enabled them to keep up with the class.

Children talked about not having sufficient English skills to participate in class. They also talked about using translation to overcome language barriers. These findings support Freeman and Freeman's (2001) argument that when children do not know the language of instruction, they develop strategies andskills that enable them to read and function in the new language.

Not only children noticed they needed support to access instruction. Teachers also noticed their students needed help to access instruction. They supported their students in different ways, including teaching reading in the students' native language and providing side by side accommodations, such as providing materials in both English and Spanish for all the subjects taught in English. This finding confirms Smith et al.'s (2008), August and Hakuta's (1997), Collier and Thomas's (1996), Krashen's (1992), and Crawford's

(1992) studies that emphasize the importance of teaching students how to read in their native language in order for them to develop literacy in the second language.

Teachers talked about the limitations or challenges they faced in school where the emphasis was on using English, not the Spanish language. Nevertheless, they were proactively using Spanish in order to help the students. Children needed the native language support from their teachers since they did not yet have the English language proficiency needed to learn the content. Mrs. Perez, a first grade teacher, states: *Principalmente les enseñas su lengua natal, luego ya para que ellos puedan transferirse al inglés (*You mainly teach them their native language, so they can transfer into English).

My study confirms research on the importance of language used for instruction in the classroom particularly with students who are transitioning into English. Freeman and Freeman (2001) and Collier and Thomas (1996) have argued for the need to provide first language support. If students are provided bilingual support, they can communicate with others and they can also access instruction.

Teachers approached the students showing they knew the students' native language. They also interacted informally and asked them how they were doing. They used strategies that enabled informal conversations with students, and that consequently led to building a relationship of understanding. Students felt more comfortable in the new school once they were able to communicate with their teachers. By being aware of the students' needs and language capabilities, teachers reached immigrant students and encouraged communication with the school. As stated by students, parents, and teachers, the use of Spanish language as a way of accessing instruction supported participant children when they came from Yoliztli to Ollin South. The teachers' actions

demonstrated that by providing instruction in the students' native language, they enabled students to access instruction.

Language as a Means of Communication

Language as a means of communication is different in Yoliztli and Ollin school settings. During the observations I conducted in Yoliztli schools, I noticed that Spanish is spoken at all times by everybody. Spanish is the national and official school language in Mexico. Students spoke Spanish inside the classroom and outside on the school playground. Both academic and conversational language skills were developed and used in Spanish. At Ollin South, the language used for communication purposes is English. English is heard all day through morning announcements, people talking English in the hallways and the cafeteria, and in pullout classes. When I talked to the children who had moved from Yoliztli to Ollin South, they had expressed the concern of not being able to understand what is going on at school. They expressed frustration particularly at the beginning of their school experiences at Ollin South.

When Karla answered the question "what could she tell about the new school at Ollin South" she expressed her experience with language: *Que seria un poco difícil* [la escuela] *con el inglés, porque yo ya estoy entiendiendo, más o menos, pero al principio no* (That it [school] would be a little bit hard because of the English, because now I am getting it, more or less, but at the beginning no). Karla expressed having *a little bit* of difficulty with school because of the language. Karla made a connection between the language of the school and the challenge of not knowing the language.

Patricia's mother also talked about her daughter's experience with language. She said: *Cuando regresó Patricia a la casa el primer día, ella regresó con dolor de cabeza, llorando, porque no entendía el inglés, el sistema, de cómo manejaban la escuela* (When Patricia came back after the first day of school, she had a headache and was crying because she did not understand English, the system, or how to navigate the school). Patricia's mother made a connection with the school environment and her daughter feeling frustrated because she did not know the language. As demonstrated by Karla and Patricia's mother, English presents a challenge for children coming from Yoliztli where all the communication was in Spanish. Ollin South is a different context since now everything is in English. Not only the parents and the students, but also the teachers recognize how children struggle with language differences, particularly at the beginning of their school experiences at Ollin South.

Teachers notice that participant children take longer to communicate with others at Ollin South, especially during the first months of school. They claim that it can take from weeks to months before the children start speaking English. While Mrs. Perez stated that it takes from six to twelve weeks for the students to be able to speak the language, Miss Vásquez and Ms. Fernández both state that it can take months. The teachers' observations had been confirmed by research that indicated it takes from one to two years to develop basic interpersonal skills, and four to seven years to develop cognitive academic language proficiency (Cummins, 2006).

What students represented as not talking in the class had been explained by research as the silent period (Gibbons, 1985), where students are learning academic and contextual knowledge while acquiring the language without necessarily producing

spoken or written responses. Gibbons (1985) argued that the process of acquiring a second language often includes a silent period. English language learners internalize the newly acquired language without having to speak it. The students I interviewed had gone through the silent period in the beginning of their schooling experiences at Ollin South. They talked about just listening in the class, not participating, and just trying to learn the language.

At Ollin South, students confronted challenges to communicate with others. During the first days of arrival students expressed that they were not able to communicate until they found out that some of their peers spoke their language. Once they knew who these peers were, immigrant students were able to ask peers for help and communicate with the teachers. Peers who knew the immigrant students' native language were able to communicate the basic procedures of school. They also told the recent immigrant students everything they needed to know in order to function as part of the new school context.

Once children find out there are other students who can speak their language, they are able to communicate, and consequently, express their need for help. Gudelio stated: *Y estaba jugando con una computadora que no sabía porque estaba en inglés. Me ayudó un niño de cuarto, y cuando me dijo cómo jugarlo lo entendí* (And I was playing on the computer that I did not know because it was in English. A fourth grade kid helped me, and when he told me how to play the computer, I got it). Gudelio acknowledged the help received by one of his classmates at a time when he was not able to work at the computer because the computer commands were in English. In this way Gudelio made visible the

importance of language for communication purposes. By being able to speak with a classmate, Gudelio was able to use the computer.

When immigrant students realize there are other children at school who can speak Spanish, students are able to communicate in formal and informal settings in the language they know. Ms. Fernández's excerpt illustrates the point:

> *The thing is that here in the border because even if they (local children) are native speakers, they are able to speak in English, and they are still strong in Spanish. The kids here don't feel too much intimidation because they know the other students also speak Spanish. So it is o.k. if they speak in Spanish, they still understand because they will talk to them.*

Ms. Fernández makes visible how the border context enhances the participant students' opportunities for speaking. She states that recent immigrant students feel comfortable with their surrounding because there are other children speaking their language. The participant students were able to communicate with classmates because most of the children enrolled at Ollin South also knew Spanish, the native language of recent immigrant children from Yoliztli. Peers' cultural background was very similar to immigrant children's.

This study confirms Schumman's theory (1978) which stated that if there is not much difference between the culture of the students who are immigrating and the culture of the native students, then the communication process can be smoother. The context in which immigrant children live as well as the cultural backgrounds of the inhabitans of the community can also be similar and facilitate student transitions into the new school and town. Border cities like Yoliztli and Ollin South are similar to each other in many ways, including the use of two languages and interconnected economies (Romo, 2007). Ollin South elementary provides immigrant children with opportunities that enables them to

access new experiences in a new school context. These experiences include being able to communicate inside and outside the classrooms in their native language.

Language as a Support Factor at Home

The experiences children have with language present a challenge not only for the children, but also for their teachers and parents. Teachers believe parents can better support their children at home when parents know the school language. Miss Sánchez, a fourth grade teacher, states: *Patricia se ha podido adaptar mejor que otros estudiantes, y mas que nada porque tiene el apoyo de su papá que habla inglés* (Patricia has been able to adapt better in comparison to other students, and more than anything it's because she has the support of her father who speaks English). Miss Sánchez attributed Patricia's good adaptation to the new school context to her father's support at home. The teacher believed Patricia's father had been able to help his daughter because he knew English.

When the school language is other than the language spoken at home, a challenge arises for parents. Parents I interviewed indicated they were used to helping their children with homework in Yoliztli. Now at Ollin South, parents were not able to help their children the same way they used to help them when they knew the school's language of instruction. Most of the homework at Ollin South is in a language that is not the parents' home language.

Parents expressed that the most challenging issue their children have been confronting since they moved from a Yoliztli school to Ollin South Elementary is the language barrier. Table 4.7 summarizes parents' responses when they were asked about the issues faced when supporting their children. The rows represent each of the

interviewed parents and the columns represent the topics that were brought up by the parents as aspects or issues related to the support they are able to provide to their children at Ollin South Elementary.

Table 4.7

Parent's Issues When Supporting their Children

	Language	Not Providing Help with Homework
Karla's mom	√	√
Gudelio's mom	√	
Janeth's mom	√	
Patricia's parents	√	
Jeniffer's mom		
Israel's mom	√	
	84%	16%

Table 4.7 shows that all of the interviewed parents said language was a challenge in helping their children at home. One parent also said she was not able to help her daughter with homework. Karla's mother said that her child was at a disadvantage because she was not able to support her child at home as much as she used to do in Yoliztli, mainly because of the school's language of instruction. Table 4.8 provides a telling case in which Karla's mother made visible the differences in the support she was able to provide in Yoliztli and at Ollin South. The parent emphasized language as a barrier and inscribed consequences of the different possibilities to support her daughter.

Table 4.8

Segment of Karla's Mother Interview

Line	Transcript	Translation	Context	Actor	Action/ Expectation	Consequence	Cause
87	Yo como no sé el idioma,	Since I do not know the language,	Ollin	I (mother)			Don't know the language
88	cuando me dijera,	When she would tell me	Ollin	She (her daughter)	tell me		
89	voy a tener un examen,	I am going to have a test,	Ollin	I (daughter)	going to have test		
90	Yo me pondría a estudiar con ella	I would study with her	Ollin	I (mother)		study with her	
91	Si yo supiera el idioma	if I would know the language.	Ollin	I	would know the language		
92	Allá cuando iba a tener examen	Over there every time she was going to have a test	Yoliztli	She (her daughter)	would have a test		
93	repasábamos todo lo que había habido	we used to practice everything that was taught	Yoliztli	We (mother & daughter)		practice everything taught	
94	en dos, tres meses,	As far back as two, three months.	Yoliztli				
95	nos poníamos a practicar ejercicios,	We used to practice the exercises.	Yoliztli	We (mother & daughter)		practice exercises	
96	yo le ponía ejercicios.	I used to put her exercises.	Yoliztli	I (mother)		put excercises	
97	Ambos participábamos	We were both participating	Yoliztli	We (mother & daughter)		participated	
98	Para ella que lo hiciera bien	So she would do well,	Yoliztli	She (her daughter)		so she would do good	
99	Pero porque yo sabia el idioma	but because I knew the language,	Yoliztli	I (mother)			Knew the language

100	y aquí no lo sé	and here I don't.	Ollin	I (mother)	Don't know the language
101	Para ayudarle a ella en clase	So I can help her in class	Ollin	I (mother)	
102	Lo poco que puedo	With the little I can and the little	Ollin	I (mother)	
103	y lo poco que se yo	I know			
104	la apoyo de igual manera que allá	I support her the same way as back there.	Ollin	I (mother)	support her (daughter)

Karla's mother narrates her experience when having to help her daughter at home to get ready for a test. She compares what she used to be able to do in Yoliztli with what she does for her daughter at Ollin South. She starts by stating that she does not know the language used at Ollin South (line 87). Karla's mother made a connection between the action of helping her daughter study together in preparation for a test to her ability of knowing the language (lines 87 through 91). In lines 92 through 99 she continues to interconnect her actions to knowledge of language by giving three examples of how she used to help her child at home when she knew the language of instruction at Karla's previous school inYoliztli. She studied together, reviewed everything covered in three months, and practiced exercises. In lines 99 and 100 the mother used subjunctive versus past tense to contrast her ability to help the child with her ability to know the language when she stated *pero porque yo sabia el idiona y aqui no lo se* (but because I knew the language and here I don't).

In lines 101 through 104, Karla's mother states that even though she does not know the language at Ollin South, she supports her daughter the same way as she did in Yoliztli. In lines 102 through 103 she says: *Lo poco que puedo y lo poco que sé yo la apoyo de igual manera* (With the little I can and the little I know I support her the same way). This statement indicates that Karla's mother is committed to support her child regardless of her own English language proficiency. Karla's mother is aware of the constraints of not knowing the school's language. She emphasizes the importance of knowing the language of instruction by repeating that she does not know the language of her daugther's school in lines 87, 91, and 99, 100. Nonetheless, she still presents herself as consistent in how she is supporting her daughter's education. She does not minimize

her effort as a supportive parent and positions herself as parent who helps by saying: *I still support her in the same way*. The parent is aware of the difference in what she used to do and what she wants to continue doing for her child. Part of Karla's mother's commitment to help her child resulted in the parent taking English as a second language classes. In a conversation after the interview, Karla's mother revealed that she enrolled in English classes so she could help Karla at Ollin South the same way she used to help her in Yoliztli.

Parents were used to helping their children at Yoliztli because they knew the language of instruction at school. Now that children are at Ollin South, parents feel they are not able to help them as much as they were helping in Yoliztli. They attribute not being able to support their child at home to the language barrier. Based on the interviews, five ouf of seven parents had from basic to none English language proficiency as self-reported in the interviews (Table 4.9).

Table 4.9

Amount of English Proficiency Expressed by Parents

Parent	English Proficiency
Janeth's mother	None
Israel's mother	Basic
Mauricio, Saul, and Juliana's mother	None
Luna's mother	None
Karla's mother	Basic
Gudelio's mother	None
Patricia's father	Conversational
Ana's mother	Did not say

As shown through the parents' interviews, parents' first reaction to the difference of languages between Yoliztli and Ollin South is to feel they are not able to support their children. Once parents know the expectations of Ollin South, they continue supporting their children to the best of their abilities, with the amount of English proficiency they have acquired. This study confirms that parents of recent immigrant children are actively committed to their children's education (Gonzalez, 2001; Moll, 2000; Valdes, 1996). Parents believe they are able to help their children regardless of the school language. They went beyond their language constraints in order to continue supporting their children at home.

Importance of Native Language According to Parents

In addition to students and teachers finding ways to develop strategies that support language development, this study portrayed the participant parents' views about their children's schooling. My study confirms research by Valdés (1996) and González (2001) and Moll (2000) who demonstrated that parents of Mexican origin recent immigrant children are willing to participate in their children's educational experiences, despite their language abilities. Even though parents at the beginning of the study talked about not being able to help their children at Ollin South as much as they used to when they were in Yoliztli, language was never a barrier to help their children at home.

Parents confirmed the importance of understanding the advantages and disadvantages of transitioning children into English and how language support comes into play. Karla's mother acknowledged the fact that her daughter was receiving at least some of the subjects in Spanish, and expressed how she took advantage of what was

offered in their home language. This parent exemplified how she became proactive when she realized the consequences of not knowing the language of instruction her daughter was being taught at school. Karla's mother enrolled into adult English courses in order to be able to help her daughter at school. Parents talked about the limitations of not knowing the English but they also emphasized that they were still playing an active role in their children's education. They did not diminish their own role in supporting their children because of the language barrier. They still continued supporting their children to the best of their language abilities.

Parents also commented about the study habits and routines they used with their children inYoliztli. They stated that now at Ollin South the routines they have are only an extension of what they used to do in Yoliztli with their children. Parents emphasized that despite the differences in the new school context they never stopped helping their children. They demonstrated that while expectations might vary, the parenting support at home will always remain to benefit the children's school experiences.

The contribution of my study is developing a broader understanding of responsibility in language support. Schools have always been held responsible for the student's language performance. Regardless of the language policies in effect at school, individuals can be proactive in supporting the children through native language support and specific teaching practices to support English language learners. My study expands the view of the responsibility of schools by showing the responsibilities that different people can take to support the recent immigrant children. What my participants had made visible is that language support can come informally from peers and teachers without

even having a bilingual program to be followed. The responsibilities taken are those by the children and also by parents and teachers.

Synthesis of Language as Part of the School Experiences

Children's schooling experiences are complex at Ollin South because of the issue of language. Freeman and Freeman (2001) argue that English language learners are required to develop not only content, but also language proficiency. In order for the students to develop content knowledge, students need to be able to access instruction. In this study, participants showed how they were able to gain access to instruction by using self-developed language strategies, and by drawing on the help of their peers and teachers, who used the students' native language to support them.

Teachers of recent immigrant students knew that their students did not speak the school language. Nevertheless, teachers formulated and developed a vehicle of communication that enabled recent immigrant students to convey what they already knew in their language. By enabling the use of Spanish as a vehicle for communication, teachers were able to learn about the students and to build relationships with their students. Once teachers knew the students, they were able to mediate learning through the use of students' native language as needed.

At Ollin South, English is the primary language, but Spanish is being used as a support that enables the transition of the children between Yoliztli and Ollin South classrooms. Even though the majority of the communication among people at Ollin South is in English, students are still exposed to a bilingual context that helps them bridge their linguistic capabilities of Spanish into Ollin South's target English language.

Regardless of their parents' English proficiency levels and the support they offered to their children at home, the students were able to continue their transition into the mainstream school context at Ollin South. The main support children received at Ollin South was teachers teaching in both languages, and peers communicating in the students' native language.

Academic Aspect Two: School Curriculum

School curriculum plays an important role in understanding the educational experiences of immigrant children because scholars have indicated a need for knowing what it is that children are learning in each of the school systems (Bryan & McLaughlin, 2005; Candela, 1997; Kitchen, 2007). Studies by Bryan and McLaughlin (2005), Candela (1997), and Kitchen (2007) had analyzed immigrant children's exposure to challenges in different subject areas after immigrating. These authors stated that teachers of recent immigrant students should be aware of the way subject areas are taught in the students' pre-emigration school setting in order to be able to help immigrant students.

Students shared their perspectives on the academic aspects with which they struggled the most in addition to language. They expressed the challenges faced because of the school curriculum. I contrasted the way school curriculum is structured in Yoliztli and at Ollin South in order to determine how the scope and sequence of curriculum can either inhibit or enhance the students' transition between classrooms. The aspects noted as important based on a marked difference between school contexts were: theme based versus isolated instruction, math mechanics, and reading approaches (Table 4.10).

Table 4.10

Comparison of Subject Areas Between School Contexts.

	Yoliztli	Ollin South
Math	• Division is conceived as abstract • Is taught in Spanish • Is taught for two hours and 10 minutes weekly	• Division is conceived as a step by step process • Is taught in English • Is taught for three hours and 45 minutes weekly
Science	• Theme-based instruction • Is taught in Spanish • Is taught for one hour and 20 minutes weekly	• Is taught in isolation • Is taught in English • Is taught for three hours and 45 minutes weekly
Reading	• Reading purpose is for pleasure • Narrative texts • Is taught in Spanish • Is taught for three hours and 50 minutes	• Reading purpose is comprehension • Informational texts • Is taught in Spanish • Is taught for seven and a half hours weekly

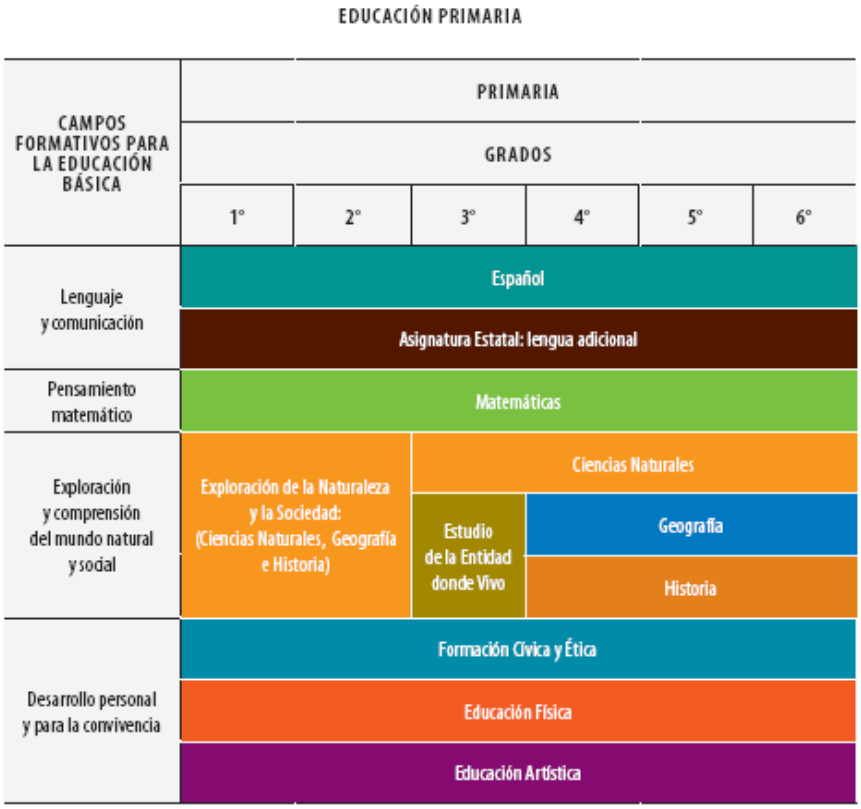
As represented in Table 4.10, one major difference noticed across subject areas is the language of instruction. While in Yoliztli all the subject areas were taught in Spanish, at Ollin South math and science were taught in English, and reading was taught in the students' native language. Additionally, the time of exposure to each subject was greater at Ollin South as compared to the time spent on each subject in Yoliztli. I discuss subject-specific differences in the subsections below.

Theme-Based Versus Isolated Subjects

During my observations at Yoliztli, I noticed that subject areas such as reading and math were taught in isolation, while science, geography, and history were taught interconnected, as part of a big field called "Exploration of Nature and Society." Yoliztli's school system is governed by the Secretaría de Educación Pública (Secretary of Public Education). This public entity requires every school in Mexico to adhere to the national education standards. According to the Secretary of Public Education (2009), the Mexican educational system standards are developed based on the philosophy that students will benefit from integrating different subject areas as part of a broader, concept-based approach. The knowledge and skills taught in school are part of a complex system where the child interacts and develops as a human being. Figure 4.1 provides a curricular map which indicates how Yoliztli's national curriculum clusters specific subject areas into a bigger theme.

Figure 4.1 portrays Mexico's national curricular map with its current formative fields (first column) and subjects by grade levels. This curricular map has been developed to articulate all the subjects through four formative fields: language and communication (lenguaje y comunicación), mathematical reasoning (pensamiento matemático), exploration and understanding of the natural and social world (exploración y comprensión del mundo natural y social), and personal development for interaction (desarrollo personal y para la convivencia).

Figure 4.1 Yoliztli's Curricular Map for Elementary Education



The subjects constituting the formative fields include Spanish (español), additional language (lengua adicional), mathematics (matemáticas), nature and society exploration (exploración de la naturaleza y la sociedad): geography (geografía), natural sciences (ciencias naturales), history (historia), civics and ethics development (formación civica y ética), physical education (educación física), and artistic education (educación artística). Fields are represented in the first column of figure 4.3, while subjects are represented in rows across the grade level columns. According to the SEP (2009), the purpose for embedding and clustering subject areas at the elementary level is to integrate the content of the different subjects in order to ensure that students develop, put into

practice, and master all competencies in an interrelated and cohesive manner. Consequently, Yoliztli's schools have a theme-based approach at all of their campuses.

In contrast to the integrated subjects in Yoliztli schools, at Ollin South subject areas are being taught in isolation from each other. Ollin South is regulated by the Texas Education Agency (TEA). This state entity requires school districts to follow theTexas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS), the state curriculum. The TEKS are divided by academic subjects, including reading, math, science, and social studies. The teachers' classroom schedules also denote the separation of subjects for instruction purposes. Table 4.4, which was discussed in the previous section on language, shows how each subject area has its own time frame (see page 67).

The differences between school curricula become visible to the students when they move from Yoliztli to Ollin South. Karla noticed that science is one of the subjects with which she struggled the most.

> *La más baja* [calificación] *fué un 75 que me saqué mal. Creo que fué en* science. *Ciencias. Allá* [Yoliztli] no había [ciencias].
>
> The lowest [score] I got was a 75 in science that I got wrong. Back there [Yoliztli] I did not have it [science].

Karla stated she struggled in science and the lowest grade she ever received was in science.When I asked her the reason science was hard, she said that in Yoliztli students did not receive science, or at least she did not remember science being taught. Karla made a connection between obtaining a low score in science with not having science in Yoliztli.Yoliztli's curricular map shown in figure 4.2 demonstrates how science is clustered with geography and history as part of a big field called "exploración y

comprensión del mundo natural y social" (exploration and understanding of the social and natural world) for the first and second grade, and natural science for third through sixth grade. By receiving instruction as part of a big theme, students are not aware of the different subjects that constitue the big field taught. At Ollin South, the subject science is called science. Karla did not make a connection with the subject of science because of the different way subjects were organized at Yoliztli.

Patricia, a fourth grade student, noticed that in Yoliztli science was taught less than at Ollin South. She said: *Ac te enseñan un poquito menos* science *y acá más* (Over here (pointing at her Yoliztli drawing) they teach you less science and over here (pointing at her Ollin South drawing, more). Using Patricia's point about the differences in the amount of science in the two schools, I used the schedules from Yoliztli and Ollin South to triangulate and confirm Patricia's insight. While Yolitzli schedule revealed an hour and twenty minutes of science instruction within the theme of "Exploration of Nature and Society," Ollin South schedule showed three hours and forty five minutes of science instruction. Patricia and Karla noticed the existence of science as a subject at Ollin South due to the emphasis given to the subject by the teachers, and the time assigned for science during the day. Differences in how science is presented by the curriculum are not exclusive for this subject. Reading is another subject that challenges students because of the differences in the teaching approach.

Reading Approach

Reading inYoliztli and at Ollin South serves different purposes and is taught differently. The approach that Yoliztli schools have for reading is shown through the students' experiences narrated by Miss Sánchez, a fourth grade teacher at Ollin South.

Miss Sánchez is confronted every year with challenges that include having the recent immigrant students learning content at the same time as they learn language. Miss Sanchez also has to help her students pass the state assessment Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS). Miss Sánchez states that in order for recent immigrant students to pass the TAKS, they must know how to read the lengthy reading passages. Students also need to be familiar with the test format.

The transcript segment in Table 4.11 begins with my question to Miss Sánchez. I asked if any of the students made any comment about differences between the school contexts of Yoliztli and Ollin South. She responded that the only comment she remembered (line 39) made by Patricia was that reading was different (line 41). The teacher says that Patricia was able to read the weekly stories (line 43) and that she was familiar with the format of these stories (line 44). However, Miss Sánchez said that Patricia struggled with the TAKS format (line 45) due to the text being structured differently (line 47). The text was longer (line 48) and had a different format (line 49) than the narrative stories Patricia could read.

Miss Sánchez pointed out the differences in the reading experiences that one of her students, Patricia, has encountered at Ollin South. At Ollin South, Patricia is exposed not only to different structures, but also to longer texts that are formatted and structured differently. In talking about how Patricia struggles with reading, Miss Sánchez signals that she faces challenges when teaching reading to recent immigrant children. When I asked Miss Sánchez about the most challenging situation she faced when teaching recent immigrant children she stated:

Table 4.11

Segment of Miss Sánchez's Interview

Line	Transcript	Translation	Actor	Actions/Expectations	Consequence	Cause
39	Lo único que sí comenta	The only thing she does mention	She (student)	Mentions		
40	acerca de lectura	about reading		about reading		
41	es que la lectura era diferente	is that reading was different	It (Reading)	was different		
42	en el aspecto de que…ammm.	in the way that….mmm….				
43	Los cuentos que hacemos durante la semana,	the stories we do during the week,	We (teacher & students)	stories we make during the week		
44	que si esta familiarizada con este formato,	she is familiar with this type of format,	She (student)		is familiarwith stories of the week	
45	pero en el formato de TAKS	but in the TAKS format		TAKS format		
46	es en el que ella ha estado batallando,	that is the one she has been struggling with,	She (student)		has been struggling with	
47	la estructura del texto,	the structure of the text,				structure of the text
48	mucho mas largo,	much longer,				Much longer
49	y el formato diferente	and the format is different				different format

> *En el aspecto de lectura es donde se me ha hecho un poco mas difícil. Es como cambiar de la estructura de un cuento que estamos leyendo por placer, a otro cuento de ahi te van las preguntas…*
>
> (Reading is where it feels a little bit harder. It's like changing from the story we are reading for pleasure to another story that requires the reader to answer questions).

Miss Sánchez states that the challenge she has faced when teaching reading to her students had to do with the different purposes for reading. She signaled that she read stories with the students for pleasure, but the students were challenged when the purpose of reading was to answer a set of questions. Answering comprehension questions is needed to prepare students for the TAKS. The reading TAKS is composed of a reading passage and a set of questions about the passage.

The reading teacher was able to acknowledge the differences between the reading formats and structures with which Patricia was previously familiar. Miss Sánchez realized that Patricia was able to read, but she was struggling because of the different types of text formats. The teacher also talked about the differences between the purposes for reading in Yoliztli and at Ollin South. By understanding the existing differences between reading in Yoliztli and at Ollin South, the teacher was able to concentrate on what the student can do instead of what Patricia was not able to do.

In the discussions about the differences noticed in Yoliztli and at Ollin South, both students and teachers indicated there were differences in the way science and reading was taught and learned. The consequences of these differences resulted in students struggling with the subjects. This study confirmed the importance of getting to know how recent immigrant students were taught in their pre-emigration school contexts.

The differences in strategies used to teach each subjects might vary considerably from place to place.

Math Procedures

Students are exposed to new strategies and procedures of mathematics at Ollin South. Kitchen (2007) emphasized the need to know how subjects are taught, particularly math, since math is assumed to be a universal subject. Some of the students say that even though math can be hard at Ollin South, they feel supported by the different resources teachers use. An excerpt of Ms. Fernández's interview illustrates how math was taught at Ollin South as compared to Yoliztli:

> *She (Ana) said that in her school they would not do many things like we are doing here, use too many manipulatives, and we were using a lot of manipulatives for math.*

Ana described to her teacher how math was taught at Ollin South in comparison to Yoliztli. Ana noticed the differences between school resources used at Yolizli by saying she used manipulatives in the math class at Ollin South, whereas in Yoliztli there were not as many manipulatives. When I conducted observations during Math classes in Yoliztli schools, I noticed teachers had a system that exposed students to a higher order thinking process, but they did not use manipulatives. Although teachers asked students questions as they taught problem solving, they did not explicitly give students the step by step procedure to solve the problems.

Students were not the only ones to communicate to their teachers that math was taught differently in Yoliztli, but their parents as well. In Table 4.12 Miss Vásquez, a third grade teacher, said that a parent of one of her students voiced out an issue concerning differences in teaching math.

Table 4.12

Segment of Miss Vásquez's interview

Line	Transcript	Translation	Actor	What	How	Context
31	Bueno, de hecho si hubo un,	Well, actually yes there was one		there was one		
32	un otro estudiante,	one…another student	Another student			
33	pero fue su mama	but it was his mother	student's mom			
34	la que se acercó a hablar conmigo	that approached me	the one (mother)	approached me (Miss Vásquez)		
35	en una conferencia,	at a parent conference				During parent conference
36	de ah por estrategias	about ahh…strategies		strategies		
37	en los problemas de razonamiento,	on problem solving	We (teacher & student)		problem solving	
38	hacíamos las estrategias,	we would do the strategies	We (teacher & student)		do the strategies	Ollin
39	paso por paso,	step by step	We (teacher & student)		step by step	Ollin
40	que ibamos haciendo,	what we were doing,	We (teacher & student)		were doing	Ollin
41	y era en los problemas de multiplicar.	and it was on multiplication problems	We (teacher & student)	on multiplication problems		Ollin
42	La señora me decía:	The lady would tell me	Lady (student's mother)	tell me		Ollin
43	¿es que porqué tiene que hacer	Why is it that you have to do	Lady (student's mother)	Have to do		Ollin
44	todos esos pasos?	All those steps?	Lady (student's	All steps		Ollin

			mother)			
45	Que las palabras clave	Key words	Lady (student's mother)		Key words	Ollin
46	y que esto y que lo otro	and this, and that	Lady (student's mother)		and this, and that	Ollin
47	Pasala la pregunta, palabras claves	give the question, key words	Lady (student's mother)		give the question, key words	Ollin
48	¿Cuál fue la palabra que usó?	What was the word she used?	She (mother)	used a word		Ollin
49	La palabra desglosar.	The word to break up into parts	Lady (student's mother)			Ollin
50	Le está pidiendo que lo desglose	you are asking my child to itemize it	You (teacher)	Asking child (student) to itemize it		Ollin
51	En Yoliztli asi no se hace.	In Yoliztli it does not work like that	It (math problem)		is not the way to do it	Yoliztli
52	Alla es 3x4 es 12 y se acabó y punto	Over there is 3x4 equals 12 and that's about it			it is 3x4 and that's about it	Yoliztli
53	Me tomó tiempo explicarle	It took me a while	It took me (teacher)	took a while		Ollin
54	que sí tiene razón	to make her understand she's right	It took me (teacher)	make her (mother)understand		Ollin
55	3x4 es 12	3x4 is 12				Ollin & Yoliztli
56	pero aquí hay formas	but here there are procedures			but here there are procedures	Ollin
57	que le pedimos al estudiante	that we are asking the students	we (teachers)		that we are asking the students	Ollin

58	que tiene que hacer	that they have to do	(student)		that they have to do	Ollin
59	previo a encontrar la respuesta de 3x4 es 12	previous to finding the answer of 3x4 equals 12			previous to finding the answer of 3x4 equals 12	Ollin

Miss Vásquez explained the step-by-step (line 39) strategies (line 38) she used to solve multiplication problems (line 41) with her students. She then started narrating what the mother asked (line 42) about all the steps (lines 43 and 44) including the use of key words (line 45 and 47) and expanded notation (lines 49 and 50). The mother referred to the way a particular math problem was done in Yoliztli and stated: *En Yoliztli así no se hace. Allá es 3x4 es 12 y se acabó y punto* (That is not the way you do it in Yoliztli. Over there 3x4 is 12 and it is over and period).

According to Miss Vásquez, it took her a while to explain to the parent (line 53) that the mother was right (line 54) about 3x4 equaling 12 (line 55), but that at Ollin South there were certain procedures required (line 56 through 58) before giving the correct answer (line 59). By explaining the math procedures at Ollin South, Miss Vásquez ensured that the parent knew the school expectations for math. The math procedures were different at Ollin South compared to Yoliztli's, even though the answers were the same. Miss Vásquez's experience with a parent of a participant child was similar to Ms. Fernández's experience. Ms. Fernández pointed out the differences noticed about the way math was taught in Yoliztli.

In Table 4.13, Ms. Fernández shared the challenges her students have had with math procedures at Ollin South, particularly with long divisions. Ms. Fernández narrated how her students told her (line 112) about their concern for not knowing how she did multiplications (line 113). In line 114, the students attributed the fact of not being able to do the time tables to the different way they used to do multiplications (line 115) as well as the division (line 116). Students saw math procedures as a challenge because of the different procedures used in Ollin South and Yoliztli classrooms.

Table 4.13

Segment of Ms. Fernández's Interview

Line	Transcript	Actor	Action/Expectation	Consequence	Cause	Context
112	they tell me	They (students)	tell me			Ollin S
113	Ay miss! I don't know how you are doing the times tables!	I (student)	don't know how you (teacher) do times tables			Ollin S
114	Ay miss! We don't know how to do the times tables!	We (students)		don't know how to do times tables		Ollin S
115	We used to do them in a different way,	We (students)			used to do them in a different way	Yoliztli
116	especially the division.				especially the division	Yoliztli
117	Even the parents come and tell me:	the parents	come and tell me			Yoliztli
118	I can't help my daughter	I (parent)		can't help my daughter		Yoliztli
119	I did not have to do it like that.	I (parent)			did not have to do it like that	Yoliztli
120	We do the long division different in Mexico	We (students)			do long division different in Mexico	Yoliztli
121	You know what?	You (student and parent)	know what?			
122	There are many different ways to do the mathematics				There are many different ways to do the mathematics	Ollin & Yoliztli
123	The thing is we need to make sure	We (teacher-parents)	need to make sure			Ollin S
124	they know the process and the steps	They (students)	know the process and steps			Ollin S
125	I send the parents a sheet of how	I (teacher)	send the parents a sheet			Ollin S

	we do it in class		of how we do it in class		
126	and how to follow the steps		how to follow the steps		Ollin S
127	And then the students will teach the parents	The students		will teach the parents	Ollin S
128	Now the parents know the two ways	The parents		know two ways	Ollin S
129	Short cuts			know shortcuts	Ollin S
130	They are going to be learning in two different ways	They (parents)		will learn two different ways	Ollin S
131	Whatever they choose to use they are going to be ok	They (parents)	choose to use	going to be ok	Ollin S

Ms. Fernández stated that not only the students but also the parents expressed their concern for not being able to help their children as a consequence of doing math procedures differently (line 119) from the way they used to do it in Yoliztli, particularly the long division procedure (line 120). In line 121 Ms. Fernández acknowledged the differences between the ways divisions could be done, emphasizing the importance of getting the students to know the different processes and steps (line 124).

She taught the different math strategies not only to the students but also to their parents by sharing how divisions (line 125) and the division procedures (line 126) were done at Ollin South (line 125). The consequences of the teacher's actions of sharing math strategies included the students teaching their parents (line 127), the parents knowing two ways of solving divisions (line 128) and shortcuts (line 129), and students and parents learning in two different ways (line 130). Ms. Fernández knew that regardless of the strategy parents chose to use, parents and students wouldl be fine (line 131).
Patricia, a fourth grade student, made explicit the difference in the long division Mrs. Fernández talked about in the previous excerpt of the interview.

In Table 4.14 Patricia started by talking about the way her teacher in Yoliztli used to show her how to divide (lines 1 through 6). The teacher taught her to cut the number in half (line 4), and the remainder (line 5) would be *what was left* (line 6). Then in line 7, Patricia shifted from Yoliztli prior math experiences to Ollin South experiences. She said that at Ollin South she was taught some strategies (line 7) that included being able to identify a division from a multiplication (line 9) and making the *casita* (little house) (line 10), which is the long division symbol.

Table 4.14

Segment of Patricia's Interview

Line	Transcript	Translation	Actor	Action	Context
1	Aca en Yoliztli la maestra me decia	Over here in Yoliztli the teacher would tell me	The teacher	Would tell me	Yoliztli
2	que para dividir tengo que	That in order to divide I have to	I	to divide I have to	Yoliztli
3	Me enseñó a mí que tenía que	She taught me that I had to	She (teacher)	Had to	Yoliztli
4	contara o que lo partiera a la mitad	count or cut it in half		Count or cut in half	Yoliztli
5	y lo que sobrara	And the remainder…			Yoliztli
6	ese iba a ser lo que me iba a quedar	That is what was left			Yoliztli
7	Aca en OS me enseñaron unas estrategias	Here in Ollin South they taught me some strategies	They (teachers)	Taught me	Ollin South
8	me enseñaron	They taught me	They (teachers)	taught me	Ollin South
9	Primero para saber si era multiplicación o división	First to figure out if it was a multiplication or a division	I	to figure out	Ollin South
10	Me enseñaron a hacer la casita	They taught me how to do the little house	They (teachers)	taught me to do the little house	Ollin South

The differences among the math procedures were noticed by students, parents, and teachers. Parents and students were challenged with the new expectations that teachers at Ollin South held for math, but they felt comfortable enough to express their concerns to the teachers. By expressing the issue of differences in how math was taught at Ollin South, the parents got the teachers' explanations that enabled them to be active supporters of their children at home. If parents would have not voiced their concerns, the consequence would have been similar to what was described in the following segment from Juliana's mother's interview:

Table 4.15

Segment of Juliana's Mother's Interview

Line	Transcript	Translation
28	la materia de matemáticas	Math subject
29	es lo que se le hace más difícil	is the hardest for her
30	En vez de unidades	Instead of ones
31	empieza con decenas	she starts with tens
32	Se confunde mucho	She gets confused a lot
33	Es que necesita ponerse usted también	It's because you need to also be involved with her
34	Es que lo que pasa es que yo	And what happens is that I
35	le explico de una manera (matemáticas) y ustedes de otra	explain (math) to her in one way and you explain to her in a different way

Juliana's mother talked about the time a teacher expressed the need for her to help her daughter at home, since Juliana was having a hard time with math (line 28 through 29). She states that Juliana *gets confused a lot* (line 32) because *she starts with tens* (line 31) *instead of starting with ones* (lines 30). In line 33 the mother then talked about the time a teacher asked her to support the child. In line 34 the mother mentioned that she did help (line 34) her daughter with math in one way but the school had a different way to explain math (line 35).

Analysis of the interviews indicated that students, teachers, and parents were aware of the differences between the way math was taught in Yoliztli and at Ollin South. These differences included the resources utilized and the procedures used for math problems. Students acknowledged the use of manipulatives during math at Ollin South. They also noticed the step-by-step math strategies being implemented by Ollin South teachers. By pointing out that math procedures were different, parents of immigrant students made visible to the teachers the need to inform them of the new math expectations. Parents needed to know the new expectations in order to be able to help their children at home.

Parents' Role in Teaching Math

Schools expect parents to support their children at home (González et al., 2005). As parents and teachers made visible in this study, schools need to find ways to communicate expectations to parents in order to develop a partnership that can enable a support system for children at home. Parents like Juliana's mother willingly started the communication link with their children's school, without waiting on the school to get in touch with them. Juliana's mother, on the other hand, provided an example of a parent who did not feel the need to communicate to the teacher the challenge she faced when having to help her child with math. Juliana's mother's ability to help her child at home was not what the teacher expected because this mother was not aware of the new expectations Juliana's teacher had at school. The differences in math strategies were not the only or main issue. The communication between the mother and the teacher was the factor inhibiting the mother's knowledge to help her child. When parents did not express

to the teacher the differences they noticed between strategies used at home and the strategies the new school context was using, the chances of helping their children the same way they used to in Yoliztli decrease.

The interviews also made visible how the parents experienced school at Ollin South with their children. These parents brought from Yoliztli expectations and knowledge about the way teachers used to teach math to their children, expecting teachers at Ollin South to use those same strategies. At Ollin South, parents made sense of the new teaching methodologies to which their children were exposed when they talked to teachers. Parents had to modify their expectations of how math was taught, and learn new ways of solving math problems.

In order to continue helping their children at home, parents adapted their expectations at Ollin South by learning new strategies to solve math problems. Parents were able to transform their expectations with the help of teachers. Teachers at Ollin South took the time to explain to the parents about differences in how they do math. They also enabled parents to continue supporting their children at home by showing them the ways that are used to solve math problems at Ollin South. Teachers' actions bridged the participant students' school experiences they had prior to immigrating to the ones they experienced at Ollin South.

Synthesis of School Curriculum

Recent immigrant students, their parents, and teachers demonstrated that students came to the U.S. elementary school from a school context that might be different from their current classroom. Immigrant children brought knowledge of the subject areas, but it

was different from what the expectations were in the new school. Immigrant students had also been exposed to different teaching practices that taught them alternate strategies for solving problems.

Children expressed having challenges when learning math, reading, and science at Ollin South. However, because parents and students communicated the differences to the teachers, teachers were able to understand the reasons behind children's challenges in doing math, reading, and science. Once teachers acknowledged these differences in the curriculum, they were able to modify their teaching practices.This finding confirms González's (2001) Moll's (2000), González et al.'s (2005), Bryan and McLaughlin's (2005), Candela's (1997), and Kitchen's (2007) studies which emphasized that in order to have students succeed, teachers needed to incorporate their students' funds of knowledge. Teachers needed to incorporate what the students and their families brought from home. Teachers of immigrant children were able to work with the information provided by the students and their parents, including strategies previously used by parents as another option for problem solving.

Teaching reading to immigrant children presented a challenge for teachers mainly because of the different purposes of reading taught in each school. Once teachers from the study acknowledged and understood the different reading approaches to which the students were previously exposed, they were able to restructure their teaching of reading. This finding confirms Smith et al.'s (2008), González and Moll's (2002), Rockwell's (1995) and Valdés's (1996) studies that emphasized knowing the students' previous forms of literacies in order to reduce cultural disparity between school settings.

Overall, the study demonstrates that the curriculum differences encountered by students, parents, and teachers were acknowledged and addressed because the differences were expressed. This study confirms González's (2001) and Moll (2000) statements on the relevance of getting to know what the students are bringing into the classrooms from their previous experiences. Students and parents of the study made teachers aware of the different ways they were previously exposed to math. Teachers also acknowledged the differences in reading approaches because they paid close attention to what their students were doing during reading instruction. By taking into account what students were bringing with them from their previous school, teachers were able to reformulate what they were teaching and how they were teaching it to their students.

Summary of the Chapter

In the analyses of school experiences of recent immigrant children I discovered that participant children emphasized the importance of language and content areas when transitioning from Yoliztli to Ollin South. Language was seen as a vehicle for accessing instruction and as the means of communication for recent immigrant students, their parents, and teachers. The use of two languages made the school transition smoother and school experiences easier. Throughout the interviews, participants of the study indicated there were more than the differences in language or instruction in their school experiences. Students, parents, and teachers understood differences in language existed, but they were proactive and communicated with each other, which allowed them to participate as part of the school context at Ollin South.

School experiences for the children were not limited to academic aspects. Students also emphasized the importance of the social aspects that allowed them to interact and socialize with others. In the next chapter the social aspects of school experiences of recent immigrant children will be analyzed to demonstrate ways in which participants mark the importance of social interaction in their schooling experiences.

CHAPTER V

SOCIAL ASPECTS OF SCHOOLING

School experiences of recent immigrant students have been analyzed through different lenses by researchers who had studied school context transitions (Crosnoe, 2005; González, 2001; Igoa, 1995; Park-Taylor, 2005; Suarez-Orozco & Todorova, 2006; Valenzuela, 1999). Most of these studies had portrayed the school experiences of recent immigrant children through the eyes of the researcher who pays particular attention to the social context (Crosnoe, 2005; González, 2001; Suarez-Orozco & Todorova, 2006; Valenzuela, 1999), as well as the emotional aspects recent immigrant students might experience (Igoa, 1995; Park-Taylor, 2005). These studies emphasized the importance of examining social aspects of the immigrant children's schooling experiences, focusing on the social contexts in which the participants interacted.

When children talked about their schooling experiences at Ollin South Elementary, one of the first things they mentioned was about the social aspects of school. One of the questions I asked during the interviews was: "What is it that you like and dislike the most from your schools in Ollin South?" Children responded that recreational time was what they liked the most about Yoliztli, and that now they missed the recreational time at Ollin South. They also talked about the peer support they received at Ollin South, as well as the friends they made through the received support. Games were also mentioned by one child. Table 5.1 represents children's reponses about the social aspects of school at Ollin South.

Table 5.1

Social Aspects at Ollin South Expressed by Children:Topics by Frequency

	Recreational Time	Peer Support	Friends	Games
Janeth	√	√	√	√
Mauricio	√			
Israel	√	√	√	
Saul	√	√	√	
Luna	√		√	
Gudelio	√		√	
Karla	√			
Patricia				
Juliana		√		
Ana				
Total	70%	40%	50%	10%

Table 5.1 shows the social aspects that children emphasized during the interviews. When students were asked about the things they liked or disliked about Ollin South, seven of the ten students immediately responded that recreational time was something they did not see at Ollin South, but used to have in Yoliztli. Recreational time was the topic that was mentioned the most by children across the academic and social aspects. Five of the ten students also stated that their friends were significant to their schooling experiences, and four of the ten students thought peer support was important at Ollin South.

By asking students the question: “What is it that you like and dislike the most about your school in Yoliztli?” I was able to elicit a comparison between the social aspects at Ollin South and their previous school inYoliztli. A summary of what the children said about the social aspects of schooling in Yoliztli is provided in Table 5.2

Table 5.2

Social Aspects at Schools in Yoliztli Expressed by Children: Topics by Frequency

Student	Recreational Time	Peer Misbehavior	Friends
Janeth	√	√	√
Mauricio	√		
Israel	√	√	√
Saul	√	√	√
Luna	√		√
Gudelio	√		√
Karla	√		
Patricia	√		
Juliana		√	√
Ana			√
Total	80%	40%	70%

Table 5.2 above represents the topics that children talked about when they referred to their prior Yoliztli schools. The rows represent each of the participant students and the columns represent the topics about social aspects of schooling children mentioned during

the interviews. The social topics included peer misbehavior, friends, and recreational time. Eight of the ten students considered that recreational time was what they used to like the most about their schools in Yoliztli and now miss at Ollin South. At Ollin South Elementary students do not have any type of recreational time. Seven of the ten students also stated that their friends play a very important role in their schooling experiences. On the other hand, four of the ten students stated that one of the things they did not like about schools in Yoliztli was peer misbehavior that prevailed within schools.

The checkmarks in Table 5.2 indicate which student referenced which topic and the last row indicates how many of the children talked about each particular topic. Table 4.15 shows that eight out of ten students said that the time they had to play at Yoliztli was important for them, followed by five students who mentioned their friends. Also, four students mentioned that their peers in Yoliztli used to misbehave.

Tables 5.1 and 5.2 portray social aspects children experienced at Ollin South and in Yoliztli schools. These tables denote a similarity between the social aspects of the school experiences on both sides of the border. What was important in Yoliztli schools continues to be important to the children at Ollin South. In the sections below I examine three aspects of the social topics mentioned by the children: Time to play or recreational time, friends, and peer support. These three social aspects were the top three topics most frequently mentioned by the students.

Social Aspect One: Recreational Time

Children emphasized the importance of having recreational time at school. According to Jarett and Waite-Stupiansky (2009) and Ginsburg (2007), schools used to

set aside some time for recess, where children had time to play and engaged in unstructured activities with their peers. Times have changed and recess has been abolished in the majority of schools, for reasons that go from liability of accidents on the playground to increased testing that requires the use of instructional time as much as possible (Ginsburg, 2007). Research by Jarett and Waite-Stupiansky (2009) and Ginsburg (2007) has shown that children look forward to an unstructured time and places within school where they can be themselves and where they can build and develop their own judgment and decision-making.

Table 5.2 indicated that the most important topic children talked about was recreational time, with 7 out of ten students talking about it. In the interviews children expressed that they missed the recreational time. These interviews portrayed how children missed the recreational time they used to have in Yoliztli, because at Ollin South they did not have this time anymore. Classroom schedules from Yoliztli and Ollin South (Tables 4.3 and 4.4.) also indicated that there was a difference in the amount of recreational time. Based on the schedules and interviews with children, I created a table that reflects a comparison of how recreational time is provided in both school contexts (Table 5.3).

Table 5.3

Comparison of Recreational Time Between School Contexts

Yoliztli	Ollin South
• Recess for 30 minutes • 1 period of seventy minutes of physical education weekly	• No recess • 5 periods of 45 minutes of physical education weekly

As reflected in the schedules of Yoliztli and Ollin South, students were provided with recess in Yoliztli. On the contrary, at Ollin South students did not have recess. Students received seventy minutes of physical education a week in Yoliztli, while at Ollin South, physical education is provided every day for 45 minutes.

Recess Versus Physical Education

Participant children talked extensively about time to play, peer support, and friends. When children mentioned the time to play they had inYoliztli, they were talking about recess. Children talked about being able to play games and make friends during recess at Yoliztli. At Ollin South there was no recess, and consequently, no time to play. When children talked about recreational time, they also talked about the games they played within this time frame. Games included sports such as soccer, basketball, kickball, and hide and seek. Janeth also mentioned a playground in Yoliztli, with swings, slides, and monkey bars.

Israel, a first grade student, expressed the importance of five minutes that he used to have for free playing at Yoliztli. He said Yoliztli was "better" when compared to Ollin South because of the time granted to play. *Alla es mejor porque allá puedes estar 30 minutos afuera jugando* (Over there it is better because you can spend 30 minutes playing outside). These minutes of free play time were not available at Ollin South. However, children saw physical education time at Ollin South as an opportunity to play games. An excerpt from Luna's interview (Table 5.4) made visible the contrast between recess in Yoliztli and physical education at Ollin South. In this interview segment Luna indicated her preference for the unstructured recess time.

Table 5.4
Segment of Luna's Interview

Line	Transcript	Translation	Actor	School's attribute/Action	Context
1	Estamos aquí con Luna, vamos a ver Luna, cuentame cualquier cosa que te acuerdes de la escuela en Yoliztli, cualquier cosa que me quieras decir, ¿cómo era la escuela allá?	We are here with Luna. Let's see Luna, tell me anything that you remember about your school in Yoliztli. Anything you want to tell me. How was school there?			Ollin S
2	Lo diferente es que aquí	What is different is that here			Ollin S
3	No te dan recreo	they do not give you recess	they (school)	do not give recess	Ollin S
4	y allá si	and back there they did	they (school)	do give recess	Yoliztli
5	¿Y porqué es importante el recreo?	And why is recess important?			
6	Porque habia juegos	Because there were games			Yoliztli
7	¿Y aquí no juegas ya?	And do you play here?			
8	Aqui nada mas vamos a P.E.	Here we just go to P.E. (Physical Ed)	We (Luna and friends)	just go to P.E.	Ollin S
9	¿Y te gusta P.E.?	And do you like P.E.?			
10	Me gusta más el recreo	I like recess more	I (Luna)	like recess more	Yoliztli
11	¿Y qué hacían en el recreo?	And what is it that you used to do in recess?			
12	Nos ibamos a jugar a los juegos	We would go to play at the playground	We (Luna and friends)	would go to play at playground	Yoliztli
13	¿Y si no te alcanzabas a subir	And what if you could not get			
14	a los juegos a que jugaban?	to the playground on time?			
15	Jugábamos a las escondidas	We would go and play hide and seek	We (Luna and friends)	go to play hide and seek	Yoliztli
16	Casi siempre alcanzábamos juegos	Most of the times we were able to	We (Luna and friends)		
17	porque salíamos temprano	get on the playground because we		get on playground	Yoliztli

18		would get out early
19	¿Cuánto tiempo tenias de recreo?	How much time did you have for recess?
20	Era poquito	Just a little bit

When I asked Luna for anything she could remember from Yoliztli and Ollin South, Luna started by saying that there was no recess at Ollin South. *Lo diferente es que aquí no te dan recreo y allá si* (The difference is that here they do not give you recess and back there yes) (lines 2-4). I then asked her why she thought recess was important (line 5) and she answered *Porque allá había juegos* (Because there were games, line 6).

In the absence of recess, Luna made a connection between recess and physical education (lines 6-8) even though she does not attribute the same value to physical education. When responding to my question if she got to play at Ollin South, Luna said *Nada más vamos a P.E.* (We just go to P.E.). Although Luna made a connection between recess in Yoliztli and physical education at Ollin South, she showed a preference for recess over physical education (lines 9 and 10) when she says *Me gusta mas el recreo* (I like recess better).

Karla also made a similar connection between physical education and the time to play. She stated *Que tambien en el gym, allá jugabas lo que tú quieras, y aquí no, lo que diga el profe* (That at the gym, over there you were able to play anything you wished, but not here, it is what the coach says). Even though physical education offered games to the students, all the activities were structured. Nevertheless, participant children considered the gym as a place where they could have some time to play. Saul, a second grade student, explained that the time to play they had in Yoliztli was for them to do whatever they wished. He stated: *Allá te ponían a hacer lo que sea, lo que tú querías jugar, menos jugar a pelear* (Over there they had you doing whatever, whatever you wished to play, except playing fights). Even though Saul felt he could play freely, he signaled he had to follow the rule of not fighting at Yoliztli.

Although children were expecting to have the time to play whatever they wished at Ollin South, they adjusted those expectations to the new structures at Ollin South. Physical Eduation became the space in which they could play, with the only difference that instead of free play, the physical education coach was structuring the games for them.When children drew their Yoliztli and Ollin South schools, Gudelio demonstrated the difference between Yoliztli's time to play and Ollin South physical education time. His drawings depicted these differences in the way he drew both campuses:

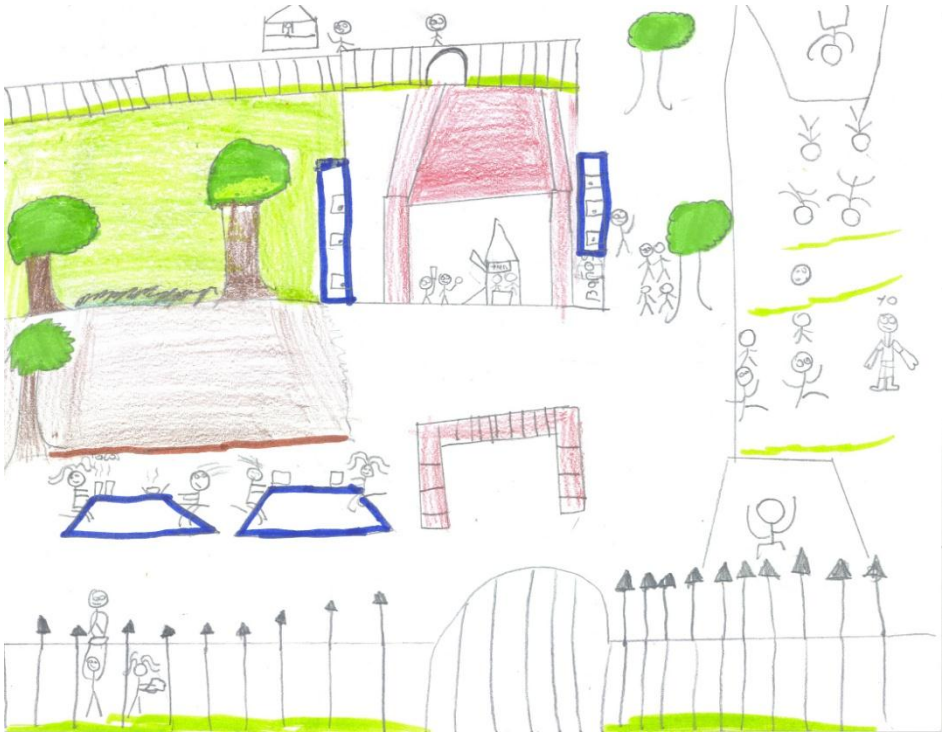


Figure 5.1 Gudelio's Drawing of his School in Yoliztli

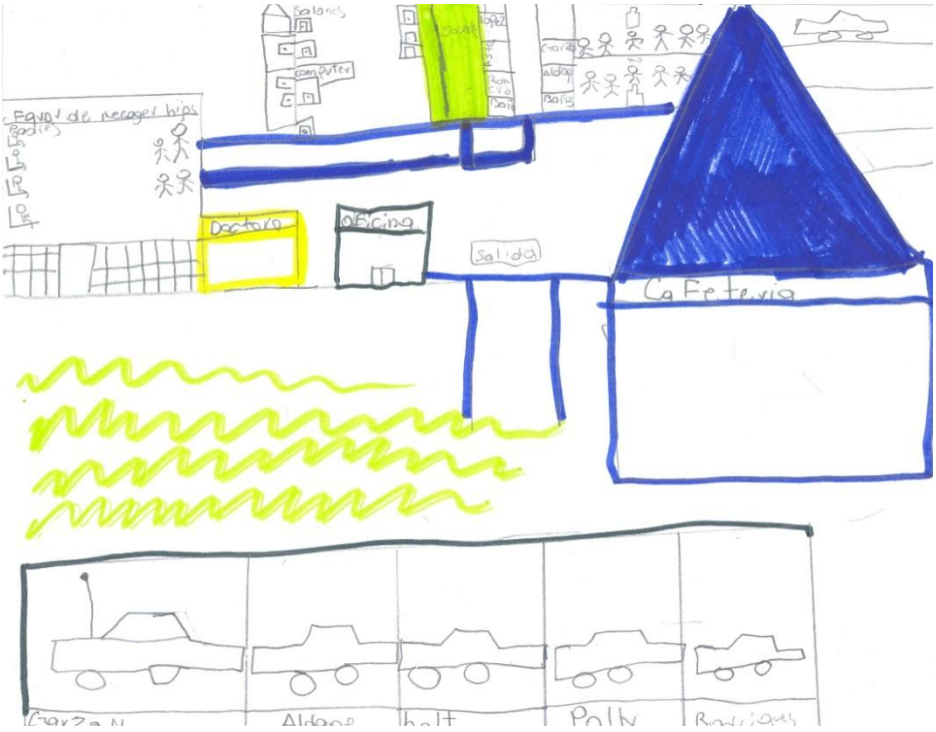


Figure 5.2 Gudelio's Drawing of his School at Ollin South

When I analyzed Gudelio's drawings (figures 5.1 and 5.2), I asked him why he drew many children spread out around the campus in Yoliztli, while at Ollin South he drew fewer children, concentrated in one area. Gudelio responded: *Es que los dibujé dentro del gym para jugar* (It's because I drew them inside the gym to play).With his answer, Gudelio made visible that at Ollin South, children could have the time to play inside the gym. Gudelio signaled that he liked going to the gym to play. He said: *Nos enseñan juegos que no nos enseñaban allá: Guard the pin, hool-a-hoop, de toda clase de juegos que no había jugado yo* (They teach us games that they did not teach us there: Guard the pin, hool-a-hoop, all kinds of games that I had not played). Gudelios' drawings also depicted differences that included the size of people, the actions of the people, the size of the buildings, the backgrounds, the fences, as well as the cars drawn. While the in depth analysis of Gudelio's and other children's drawings is beyond the scope of the

study, the differences in Gudelio's drawings indicate more emphasis on people and interactions in his Yoliztli school as compared to the foregrounding of cars and buildings at Ollin South. In this way, he emphasizes the social aspects of school as more visible in Yoliztli.

All children signaled the need for the time to play they used to havee in Yoliztli. Since at Ollin South they did not find the time to play called "recess," they still found a way to play. They realized that at Ollin South, the physical education coach also offered games that allowed them to play and interact with other children. Participant children realized that the expectations they brought from Yoliztli did not fit the local context of Ollin South. They had to realize that the opportunities to play games at recess were only one kind of opportunity to play with friends. Even though at the beginning of their schooling experiences children emphasized the absence of recess, once they figured out other opportunities to play, they transferred their expectations for play into the physical education time.

Children connected the experiences they had in Yoliztli with new ones at Ollin South through substitution of recess with the physical education class. Because of their previous experiences in their schools in Yoliztli, students had expectations for time to play. They became aware that the experiences they had were only one way of having time to play. Children realized that there was more than one way of having time to play, and the connection they made with physical education allowed them to transform their expectations and meet their needs for play time.

Synthesis of Recreational Time

One of the things I discovered when researching schooling from children's point of view was the importance of recreational time. As Gudelio and Patricia demonstrated, children emphasized the importance of recreational time as part of their school experiences. This finding confirmed Kyratzi's (2004) study about the peer relationships and the construction of games, which ultimately resulted in scaffolding for second language acquisition. Immigrant children knew they needed the recreational time they used to have at their pre-emigration schools to socialize and interact with other children.

Children also demonstrated that they have been able to adapt to the new school context and expectations by substituting activities that no longer exist with activities and spaces that were available. Participant children looked for other times during the school day where they could continue less structured interactions and play. They were able to substitute physical education for recess, even though they were aware that they were not provided with the same type of unstructured activities. The literature reviewed on Mexican and U.S. schooling had not considered recreational time as part of the immigrant children experiences. This unusual finding gives direction for further studies. Further studies are needed to examine the way recreational time is allotted and used in different school contexts.

Social Aspect Two: Friends

Friends were mentioned repeatedly by children during interviews. Table 5.1 presented at the beginning of the chapter showed that half of the participant students talked about their friends in both Yoliztli and Ollin. Students expressed how much they

missed their friends because they used to play with them inYoliztli. At Ollin South, children gave a different meaning to their friends. They saw their friends as the ones supporting them at school. Table 5.5 illustrates reasons for friendship and what friendship involves from the perspective of each of the participants.

Table 5.5

Reasons for Friendship

Student	To Play With	Friends Support Them
Janeth	√ (Ollin)	
Mauricio		
Israel	√ (Yoliztli)	
Saul	√ (Yoliztli)	√ (Ollin)
Luna	√ (Yoliztli)	
Gudelio	√ (Yoliztli)	√ (Ollin)
Karla	√ (Yoliztli)	√ (Ollin)
Patricia	√ (Yoliztli)	
Juliana		√ (Ollin)
Ana		
Total	7	4

Table 5.5 shows the reasons that each of the participants mentioned for having friends in Yoliztli or at Ollin South. The rows represent each of the interviewed children and the columns represent the way children see their friends. The checkmarks indicate which

student referenced which way they saw their friends. The last row indicates the number of students who recognized their friends as either partners to play, or as persons who support them at school.

When I asked the children about their schooling experiences in Yoliztli, seven out of ten students mentioned their friends. Four of the same students said that at Ollin South they saw their friends as a support that helped them succeed at school, either socially or academically. Three of the participant children talked about their friends in both settings. When I asked Patricia about the things she liked the most from Yoliztli and Ollin South, Patricia talked about her friends. In the interview excerpt included in Table 5.6 Patricia demonstrated how by being invited to partner during play created an opportunity to gain a new friend.

Table 5.6

Segment of Patricia's Interview

Line	Transcript	Translation
68	Es como yo	It's like me
69	Cuando llegué a la escuela,	when I arrived at school
70	Estaba sentada en el recreo	I was sitting during recess
71	Y nadie me hacía caso,	and no one would pay attention to me
72	Y llego una niña y me dijo:	and a girl came by and said:
73	Tu eres Patricia, ¿verdad?	You are Patricia, right?
74	La nueva niña,	the new girl,
75	¿Quieres ser mi amiga?	Do you want to be my friend?
76	Luego la niña dijo:	Then the girl said:
77	¿Quieres ser mi amiga?	Do you want to be my friend?
78	Yo dije: Está bien,	I said: That's fine
79	¿Cómo se juega ésto?	How do you play this?
80	Nada más tienes que pegarle	You just have to hit
81	a la pelota y correr todas las bases	the ball and run all bases
82	Y siempre jugamos eso…	and we would always play that
83	Y yo dije, ahh que bueno!	and I said, oh good!
84	Porque no he tenido otra amiga	because I haven't had another friend

Patricia narrated her dialogue with one of her friends in Yoliztli. In lines 70 and 71 she described how lonely she felt during recess and how nobody would pay attention to her. A girl finally approached her (line 72) and asked her if she was Patricia (line 73), *la nueva niña* (the new girl, line 74). Then she asked Patricia if she wanted to be her friend (line 75) and invited her to join a kick ball game (lines 80-81). In line 83 Patricia signaled feeling good about being able to make friends in a new school in Yoliztli.

Juliana, on the other hand, talked about her experience of meeting friends at Ollin South. In the interview segment represented in Table 5.7 Juliana described the many things she was able to accomplish at school because of her friends.

Table 5.7

Segment of Juliana's Interview

Line	Transcript	Translation
120	A Daniela la conocí,	I met Daniela
121	No sabia cuántas eran,	I did not know how many
122	cuántas vueltas en el gym,	how many laps around the gym
123	era mi primer amiga	she was my first friend
124	Fernanda fue cuando ya	Fernanda was when
125	estaba con mi segunda maestra,	I was with my second teacher
126	Que yo no sabía cuáles libros traerme	when I did not know which books to take
127	Para la clase de Ms Fernández	to Ms. Fernández's class
128	Ella me ayudó a buscar los libros,	She helped me look for the books,
129	a saber cuáles son,	to know which ones where,
130	y a Karla fué	and Karla was
131	cuando me ayudo a aprender inglés	when she helped me learn English
132	me ayudó con un trabajo,	she helped me with a work
133	Y ella fué la que me está enseñando	and she is the one who has been teaching
134	Inglés.	me English
135	Y Yaresi la conocí cuando me ayudó	And Yaresi I met her when she helped me
136	A saber ir a la cafeteria,	to know how to get to the cafeteria
137	dónde nos ibamos a sentar,	where we were supposed to seat
138	o dónde nos ibamos a formar en la	or where we were supposed to get in line
139	linea	

Juliana gave several examples about her friends and the way she developed these friendships. In lines 120 through 122, Juliana explained how she met Daniela, one of her first friends at Ollin South (line 123). Daniela explained to her one of the physical education activities she was required to do. Juliana also talked about Fernanda (line 126), another friend who advised her of which books to take whenever they had to rotate between classes (lines 126 through 129). Juliana also talked about the way Karla helped her enhance her second language acquisition (lines 131-133). Another friend who has helped her was Yaresi (line 134). Yaresi showed Juliana some of the school procedures such as getting to the cafeteria (line 135), where to sit (line 136), or where to line up (line 137). In the interview Juliana demonstrates how she made friends as she was trying to find her way through the new school at Ollin South. For Juliana, friends at Ollin South were those who helped her with school.

Gudelio also shared his experience with friends at Ollin South. Tables 5.8 and 5.9 demonstrate Gudelio's experiences with friends in Yoliztli and at Ollin South. These two interview excerpts illustrate the differences in children's experiences with play in both school contexts.

Table 5.8

Segment of Gudelio's Interview

Line	Transcript	Translation	Analytic Comment
5	¿Qué es lo que más te	What is it that you liked the	
6	gustaba de Yoliztli?	most about Yoliztli?	
7	¿De allá? Que siempre	From there? That we used to	Child is referring
8	jugábamos	always play	to his friend
9	con un maestro a juegos	games with a teacher	as "we"
10	como a futbol o atrapadas, o	Such as football or catch, or	

In this interview excerpt, Gudelio talked about the things he liked the most about Yoliztli. He stated he liked how he and his friends would always play different games with a teacher. When he said "we," Gudelio used the plural first person pronoun to indicate he was part of a group of friends who played at school in Yoliztli.

On the other hand, when Gudelio talked about his experience with a friend at Ollin South, he focused on the support his friend provided. Table 5.9 includes Gudelio's interview excerpt, in which he narrated his experience with his friend and how that friend helped him.

Table 5.9

Segment of Gudelio's Interview

Line	Transcript	Translation
121	Me explicó cómo ibamos a jugar	He explained how we were going to play
122	Los juegos de la computadora	the computer games
123	El se acercó a mí	He approached me
124	y me enseñó todo lo que había	and taught me all I needed to know
125	que aprender en la escuela.	about school
126	Me ayudó mucho	He helped me a lot
127	y supe qué hacer con mis maestras	and I knew what to do with my teachers
128	!Todo!	Everything!
129	Y me enseñó	And he taught me
130	A cómo usar las computadoras	how to use the computers

In lines 121 and 122 Gudelio signaled that his experience with a friend at Ollin South was related to an academic activity which happened in the computer laboratory. He attributed the fact that he was able to function at school to his friend by stating in line 124 and 125 *y me enseñó todo lo que había que aprender en la escuela* (and taught me all I needed to learn at school). Gudelio said that because of the help received from his friend, he also *knew what to do* with his teachers (line 127). He emphasized through his accent

on *todo* that he learned everything from his friends. The friend taught Gudelio how to play computer games (line 121 and 122), and all he needed to know (line 124). The friend also helped him a lot (line 126) in order to know what to do with the teachers (line 127), and how to use the computers (lines 129-130).

Synthesis of Friends

My analysis signaled that "friends" is a concept used by children in different ways depending to the context about which they talked. In Yoliztli, participant children remembered their friends as those with whom they used to play. At Ollin South children signaled as friends those who supported them at school. Children attributed being able to navigate through the new school context to their friends.

Recent immigrant children expressed that their friends took an active role in helping them navigate the new environment. This study attested to Valenzuela's (1999), and Suarez-Orozco and Suarez-Orozco's (2006) research which has demonstrated that immigrant students tended to rely on the people who surrounded them to help them access school.

Social Aspect Three: Peer Support

When recent immigrant children transition into the U.S. classrooms, they have to adapt to the new school settings that require them to adapt (Crosnoe, 2005). Crosnoe (2005) also stated that adapting to a new school context is not easy, especially when school structures have different expectations for the students. Risi et al. (2003) found that the social functioning of peer groups contribute to the children's social and school

adjustment issues. Risi et al. (2003) noticed a direct impact of peer support on children's behavior, as well as on the children's overall developmental and academic performance. In my interview with children, peer support was mentioned as an important aspect of their school experiences at Yoliztli and Ollin South.

Peer Support at Ollin South

The impact of peer support in the immigrant children's school experience has been analyzed by researchers who study the supports available to children in schools (Risi et al., 2003). In my interviews, some of the children expressed anxiety about the first days of school at Ollin South. Gudelio and Israel also expressed fear of not being able to communicate or socialize with other children. When I asked Gudelio *what is the first thing that crossed your mind when arriving at school?* he said: *Que en esta escuela no podía hacer amigos porque todos hablaban inglés excepto yo* (That in this school I could not make any friends because everybody spoke English except for me). Gudelio believed he might not be able to make friends at the new school in Ollin due to differences in language. In recounting that the first thing he thought about was making friends, Gudelio made visible the importance of peer networks in students' transitioning between schools.

Students stated that they felt relieved when they started to communicate with their classmates. When I asked Gudelio about his experience of moving from Yoliztli to Ollin South, he answered that it had been improving because of the help of a friend. Table 5.10 provides a transcription of his statements about the importance of peer support in his school experience at Ollin South.

Table 5.10

Segment of Gudelio's Interview

Line	Transcript	Translation
137	Sería más o menos	I would say so so
138	porque cuando entré aquí no sabía	because when I came here I did not
139	como encajar	know how to fit
140	Ahorita ya estoy bien	Now I am fine.
141	Mis maestras ya me están ayudando	My teachers are now helping me
142	y unos amigos mios me están también	And some friends of mine are also
143	ayudando	helping me
144	Cuando fué clases de verano	When I went to summer school
145	y estaba jugando con una	
146	computadora	and I was playing with a computer
147	que no sabía porque estaba en inglés	that I did not know because it was in English
148	me ayudó un niño de cuarto	a fourth grade student helped me
149	y cuando me dijo cómo jugarlo le	and when he told me how to play it I
150	entendí	got it
151	y le estaba poniendo las letras	and I was typing the right letters…
152	correctas…	

Gudelio evaluated his experience of moving to Ollin South by saying: *Sería más o menos* (I would say so so, line 137) because he felt he did not know how to fit in (line 138). He then said he was fine now (line 139) since he had received help from his teachers (line 140) and also from friends (line 141). The teacher was not the only person perceived by Gudelio as the one who could provide knowledge. In these two lines, Gudelio gave the same value to the help teachers and his peers provided. Gudelio believed students were also able to provide him with the knowledge he needed. Gudelio remembered attending summer school (line 142) and playing with computers (line 143). He stated that he did not know how to play since the game was in English (line 144). Gudelio then

acknowledged the help provided by a fourth grade student (line 145). This student helped him understand how to play with computers (line 146).

Children have attributed being able to blend in and function as part of the new school context to peer support (See Tables 5.8, 5.9, and 5.10). Also, the peers mentioned by the participants as those who helped them were once recent immigrants themselves. See Table 5.11 for a representation of the immigration years of the students mentioned by the participant children as peer-support.

Table 5.11

Students who provided peer support to participant students

Student that provided peer support	Years of immigration	Helped
Daniela	4	Juliana
Fernanda	5	Juliana
Karla*	1	Juliana
Yaresi	4	Juliana
Arianna	4	Janeth
Fourth grader	4	Gudelio

*Student who participated in the study

Peer Support in Yoliztli

After noticing the importance of peer support at Ollin South, I followed the data to investigate possible reasons for this emphasis on peers. I reviewed my fieldnotes from observations in Yoliztli schools and I focused on the types of interaction children had with peers and teachers. My analysis of field notes revealed that peer groups were often

used by teachers in Yoliztli. At one of the schools I observed the teacher paired her students when the students were given an assignment. She used peer support as part of classroom interaction and learning strategies. Students were used to working with their peers and asking peers for help, as confirmed by Saul, who stated that his teacher in Yoliztli would tell him that before asking her for help, he needed to look for help from another student: *Que cuando no pudiera fuera a preguntarle a él, y luego a ella mejor* (That whenever I could not do it, to go ask him first, and then her).

Synthesis of Peer Support

Peer support was mentioned consistently as part of schooling in Yoliztli and at Ollin South. Students in Yoliztli schools utilized peer tutoring as a strategy when they needed help, and they continued using this tool in the new school at Ollin South. The children's previous school experiences in Yoliztli helped them to integrate into the new school context with the help of other peers. Since both school contexts offered the same ways of interaction including pair work in classrooms, children who immigrate fromYoliztli to Ollin South are familiar with cultural practices of the new school experiences.

Children attributed being able to do things at Ollin South to the peer support provided by some of their classmates. According to Gudelio, he was able to fit in because of the helped offered by another child. In the same way, Saul also mentioned his experience at Yoliztli with peer support, but this peer support was suggested by the teacher. In both school contexts peer support provided the help recent immigrant children needed to adapt to the new school.

Despite the differences that existed between school contexts of Yoliztli and Ollin South, the interactions between students, teachers, and parents shaped how the new school was experienced. Children, parents, and teachers did not give up when being challenged with new and different expectations in their new school. Instead, they took advantage of the similarities between school contexts, reached out to others, and modified their expectations when confronted with differences. Differences in expectations were addressed because they were expressed.

Summary of the Chapter

In this chapter I analyzed how participant children experienced social aspects of school at Ollin South as compared to prior schooling in Yoliztli. Students emphasized how much they missed the time they had to play in Yoliztli. During this time, they were able to make friends. At Ollin South, students noticed that physical education provided the time they needed for play in a way that was different from Yoliztli. Students knew they could play some games during physical education time, but they also understood that these games were structured and guided by the teacher. In contrast, in Yoliztli, children had the opportunity to choose any game they wanted to play during recess. Children at Ollin South were still able to interact and play with other children by transforming their recess expectations into the time and space allotted for physical education.

Children also mentioned the importance of their friends in both school settings. They expressed how much they missed their friends from Yoliztli, and how they made friends at Ollin South. Children said they were able to learn many things they needed to know at Ollin South because of their new friends. Friends acted as peer support to recent

immigrant children, enabling them to function in the new context. Participant children faced differences and similarities between the two school contexts. However, their school experiences had been relatively smooth because of the similarities between the two school contexts. As for the differences noticed in the two schools of Yoliztli and Ollin South, children, parents, and teachers were able to transform their expectations, compensating for the differences among school contexts in order for the students to be able to succeed.

In the final chapter I first provide a synthesis of the findings. I then discuss the implications of this study. The implications I provide are for students, parents, teachers, school administrators, curriculum writers, and teacher preparation programs. I also provide directions for future research and outline ways I will use the findings of this study in my work. This study concludes with final thoughts about potential contributions of this study beyond the local situation.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS AND FURTHER STEPS

The purpose of this study was to examine how students talked about their school experiences in the new school context as they transitioned from Yoliztli to Ollin South classrooms. The study enabled me to develop a deeper understanding of recent immigrant student and their parents' and teachers' perspectives, challenges and needs as they work together to create just educational opportunities and smoother transitions for children who come to the U.S. elementary school from prior schools in Mexico.

In this study I made visible how recent immigrant students' school experiences are shaped by the expectations and practices they bring from their prior schools as well as by the opportunities they encounter in the new school. The analyses in chapter four demonstrated that academic aspects of language and differences in the way subject areas were taught created challenges in the new school for students, their parents, and teachers. However, students, teachers, and parents took an active role in mediating the challenges and creating a smoother transition for the children. Analyses in chapter five further revealed that children emphasized social aspects of school as factors influencing their adjustment to the new school. Despite the differences in recreational time and friendships in the U.S. school, children drew on peer networks and adjusted their expectations of time to play into the existing structures of the new school.

Examining academic and social aspects of schooling at Ollin South as compared to Yolitztli schools, I identified four core findings that reveal the complexity of recent immigrant student experiences at the post-immigration school. The first two represent the theme of academic aspects of schooling examined in chapter four and the latter two are

part of the social aspects of schooling discussed in chapter five. First, students, parents, and teachers demonstrated that native language support was important for children who transition to the U.S. from schools where the language of instruction is not English. Second, participants made visible the importance of understanding the differences in teaching practices between the U.S. and Mexican school contexts. Third, students made visible how recess and time to play provided opportunities for them to develop relationships with others at the new school. Fourth, students also demonstrated that peer support was influencing their school experiences and enabled them to do and learn things in the new school they may not have been able to do without the help of their classmates and friends.

These findings present implications for students, teachers, parents, school administrators, curriculum writers, as well as teacher preparation programs. While I presented these implications for different groups of people impacting children's education, each of these groups of people are educators who play multiple roles. Drawing on the four main findings I also present recommendations for further research. I recommend that further research be conducted on topics related to this study, particularly focusing on schooling in border areas such as Yoliztli-Ollin. I also argue for more research using full scale ethnographies and longitudinal case studies to document the process of schooling adaptation of recent immigrant students who enter the U.S. schools.

Implications for Students

Students in this study demonstrated how native language support available in the school enabled them to transition more smoothly from Yolitzli to Ollin. Students also

talked about being surprised to find out that their teachers and peers spoke their native language. Their surprise and discovery that many people at Ollin South school speak Spanish, presents an implication for other students to consider a possibility that native language support may be available in the new schools. In border areas such as Yoliztli-Ollin, students can expect to find teachers and peers who speak their native language. Consequently, modifying the expectation that in U.S. schools everyone speaks only English could help students alleviate some of their anxieties as they enter a new school. If immigrant students are aware of the possibility of native language support, they can take more active steps in reaching out to peers and teachers and finding people who can use their native language to help them in school.

The differences between school contexts revealed by students, parents, and teachers participating in the study signal the importance for incoming immigrant students to be aware that a new school in the U.S. most likely will not be the same as their school in Mexico. If children become aware that curriculum and content areas may be taught differently, they could find ways to build on their prior knowledge to adapt to the requirements in the new school. Instead of expecting their new teachers to act, be, and teach the same way as the teachers they previously had, recent immigrant students need to approach their new teachers and show what they know and talk about how they were taught previously. In this way, they could find ways of building on their prior knowledge and developing new ways of learning. At the same time, they would be creating relationships with teachers who may become more aware of ways to help recent immigrant students succeed.

Students I interviewed also expressed the importance of having a non-structured time to play and interact with other children. They modified their expectations of non-structured recess time they had in Yolitzli by substituting recess with physical education time. By finding a way to play in the new school structure, children made visible the importance for immigrant students to look for spaces where they can play in spite of the absence of play time in the school schedule. Rather than expect things to be the same, immigrant students need to expect differences and take actions to transform opportunities in a new setting to meet their needs. They can make choices in how to use the opportunities available within the current context of the school to do what they value and need.

Children demonstrated a tendency to rely on the people surrounding them in order to understand the roles and relationships, norms and expectations (Collins & Green, 1992) and ways of learning and interacting in the school. They valued peer support and the actions their friends took in helping them navigate the new environment. They transformed the concept of friendship from friends being those with whom they could play, to friends as people who could support them in school. Finding new ways of making friends and drawing on friends' knowledge may enable recent immigrant students to create better academic opportunities for themselves. By building social networks and asking peers for help or guidance, immigrant children can get some of the extra support needed to adjust to the new school context.

Implications for Teachers

Teachers of immigrant students make a significant impact on the children's school experiences. The responsibility for educators in the U.S. is to find out what kind of schooling their immigrant children have had in their pre-emigration settings. Children might have more knowledge than what the teachers recognize on first impression. If teachers took the time to find out about the children's educational backgrounds and the differences between the schools in the two countries, teachers would be better equipped to provide a smoother transition for recent immigrant students as they enter the new school in the U.S.

Teachers participating in this study demonstrated that they understood that immigrant children needed help to access instruction. They supported their students in various ways, including teaching reading in the students' native language and providing materials in both English and Spanish for the subjects taught in English. They also reached out to the students in the students' native language, in this way developing trusting relationships and pathways of communication. By establishing informal and formal ways of communicating with students, teachers opened doors for students to get to know the teacher, the class, and learn the cultural practices of the new school.

Participant teachers demonstrated that finding ways to support students through native language use, communication, and use of accommodation strategies enables students to become members of the class and to understand ways of navigating the new school. Even when teachers may not know the students' native language, they could point out to the students the resources available to them. The resources may include peers and teachers who speak the student's native language, peers who share immigration

experiences, or materials available in the student's home language. Teachers can also provide the support for their students by reaching out to the parents and encouraging the parents to continue supporting their children's education.

Teachers in this study demonstrated that they were able to get more from their students once they were aware of the methodologies, strategies, and mechanics immigrant children had learned at their pre-emigration schools. Teachers need to develop ways of learning from the children and their parents about the curriculum to which students were exposed before immigration.By learning about their students and the differences between school contexts, teachers were able to help them more. Freeman and Freeman (2001) stated that "if we get to know the individuals, show an interest in them, and meet their specific needs, we as educators give them greater chances for future school success" (p.5).

Teachers of immigrant students need to be aware that the more they know the children they teach, the more they can address their academic needs by providing the most appropriate teaching methodologies and strategies as well as any curriculum adaptations needed to close any existing gaps between what was taught in the previous school setting and what is being taught at the new school. Teachers can take advantage of the immigrant students' previous knowledge by using it in their lessons and thus enabling students to move forward in their education.

In addition to understanding the academic aspects of immigrant children's school experiences, teachers also need to be aware of the social aspects these experiences entail. Throughout the study, students expressed the importance of interacting with other children. If teachers understand the value children attribute to play time, friends, and peer

networks, teachers could build opportunities for students to interact within and outside of the classroom. Giving a few minutes of unstructured play time between subject matter lessons could help children develop their social skills as well as creativity through play (Ginsburg, 2007). Teachers could also provide opportunities for students to get to know each other and to work with each other by developing cooperative learning activities to maximize their learning. Cooperative learning enables students to develop academic knowledge and social skills needed for success in school since it "increases academic learning and retention, improves relationships among students, and enhances students' social and cognitive development and psychological adjustment" (Johnson & Johnson, 2005, p. 327). By being aware of the importance of social aspects of school, teachers can create learning opportunities which build on and bridge student social and academic experiences and knowledge.

Implications for Parents

Parents of the participant children played a vital role in shaping their children's school experiences. They demonstrated that being advocates of their children's education opened the door for teachers to learn more about children. Parents let the teachers know their children knew some of the content from previous school. They enabled the teachers' to understand the differences between the way their children were previously taught and the current teaching approaches at Ollin South. As parents participating in this study made visible, talking to the teachers and helping teachers understand children's prior experiences may help make a transition to the new school smoother for the immigrant children. Parents can help teachers understand the funds of knowledge students bring

from home (González et al., 2005), thus contributing to developing supports for children's academic success.

Parents need to know that teachers are willing to learn more about their children and that teachers welcome comments about student home and previous school experiences. Parents should not wait for a teacher to request a parent conference because the student struggles or misbehaves. Instead, parents should be aware that many schools like Ollin South have an open door policy, and that teachers welcome parents who want to talk and are willing to help and become active participants in their children's education. By becoming proactive in their children's schools, parents of recent immigrant children can build the home-school transitions that support student opportunities for school success.

Implications for School Administrators

School administrators need to understand the importance of native language instruction so they can support immigrant students' education and pathways for success. Instruction in the students' native language has been confirmed in this study to be a factor that enhances the students' transition from one school to another. Children benefit from learning in their native language and having teachers and peers who use the children's native language to provide academic and social supports in the new school. If the school district does not provide the financial resources to implement a bilingual program fully and adequately, or the high stakes state tests are not providing enough time for the children to master their native language and later transition into English, then administrators need to ensure teachers receive the professional development about second

language acquisition in order for the teachers to be able to support their students' language development.

In border-area schools where many students are recent immigrants, it is important that school administrators understand the differences and similarities in the school contexts, including differences in language, school curriculum, teaching strategies, recreational time and peer support. By being informed about the differences in schools on both sides of the border, school administrators can help teachers adapt the curriculum to enable students to build on their prior schooling. School administrators need to provide the time for teachers to meet during the school year to plan and work on modifying and/or adapting their lessons according to the students' previous schooling experiences. School administrators can also encourage their teachers to conduct parent workshops in which teachers show parents how math, science, and reading are being taught in the U.S. school and how this teaching may differ from their children's prior exposures to these subjects. These types of workshops could benefit not only the parents and the children, but teachers and the school, as these workshops could expand parent-school communication capabilities.

Another aspect to acknowledge is that immigrant children as well as their parents depend on networks of relationships with peers and teachers. School administrators need to ensure that teachers inform immigrant students about the network supports available for them. Such supports may include a buddy system, spaces for social interaction, and cooperative learning activities integrated in all classes.

School administrators could consider developing a formal orientation for every student and his or her parents in order to inform them about the new school. School

administrators can use schedules to show the differences in school expectations, subjects taught and to point out times students will be exposed to instruction in different languages. They can also explain where and when children will have an opportunity to interact with other children. By taking a proactive stance in learning about recent immigrant student backgrounds and needs, by providing professional development and support for teachers and parents, school administrators can make a significant impact in the way recent immigrant children experience and succeed in the new school.

Implications for Curriculum Writers

This study uncovered that there are differences between curricula in schools located on the Mexican and U.S. sides of the border. Subject matter coverage, thematic versus isolated curriculum organization, and amount of time per subject vary, creating differential expectations of school for children and their families. Curriculum writers could find ways of drawing on those differences to develop flexible curricula which allow multiple ways of thinking and problem solving. Just like teachers from the study recognized that there were multiple possibilities to solve a math problem, curriculum writers need to recognize that there are multiple ways of teaching a specific subject. Finding out about students, their families, and their prior schools, curriculum writers should incorporate the cultural knowledge of students and their families, thus making the curriculum more relevant for recent immigrant students.

Curriculum writers could build on the knowledge and access to students held by teachers in border areas. Establishing a network or advisory board of teachers from both sides of the border and providing them opportunities to share what they do in each grade

level could provide a basis for developing a knowledge base about what, when, how and for what purposes students are taught specific content and procedures. School curriculum should be a working document that is guided by the national and state standards that target specific knowledge and skills, but it should leave open possibilities for differentiated and accommodated instruction based on each individual's academic needs. Curriculum needs to reflect understandings of who is being educated, in what ways, and for what purposes.

Implications for Teacher Preparation Programs

Teacher preparation programs must prepare teachers to meet the needs and support the success of the culturally and linguistically diverse students. Particular emphasis on how immigrant children experience school should be given in universities situated on the border, since teachers very likely will work for school districts with a high concentration of immigrant students. Teacher education programs should prepare pre-service teachers in how to address the challenges they might experience during their first years of teaching, particularly challenges and opportunities teaching immigrant children.

Teacher preparation programs should expose their pre-service teachers to information about the differences and similarities between the teaching practices, curriculum, and methodologies to which students have been exposed at their pre-emigration schools. Pre-service teachers must also understand and have sufficient knowledge about language acquisition in order to be able to support immigrant children who do not speak the school language and who are in the process of acquiring a second language.

Pre-service teachers should be prepared to foster and develop a learning environment that is conducive to learning, regardless the students' language abilities. They must be able to have high expectations for students as well as their parents. Pre-service teachers must know how to develop and sustain supportive relationships by recognizing, embracing, and valuing the parents' knowledge, and by constantly reminding them of their valuable contribution to their children's education. Teacher education programs which have an explicit emphasis on meeting the needs of diverse students, including recent immigrant students, can help produce teachers the children need and deserve.

Recommendations for Further Research

In this study I examined how ten recent immigrant children, their parents and teachers, described children's schooling experiences after children immigrated from a Mexican school in Yolitzli to a U.S. school in Ollin. In my study and the review of the literature, I discovered that research about school experiences of recent immigrant students is very complex and that multiple research studies may be needed to understand the scope of those experiences and the factors influencing them. Immigrant students' schooling experiences may vary according to the students' age, length of residency, ethnicity, second language proficiency, as well as school contexts and teaching practices. I believe further research is necessary in order to provide more information about how various personal, societal, and academic factors can impact immigrant students' school experiences.

Even though in my analysis I did not focus on the border context of the study, research related to the border contexts is needed in order to understand how context influences school experiences. In my study, the border context provided the opportunities immigrant children needed to access new experiences the new school provided for them. This study confirmed González's (2001) work on immigrant children's experiences. González (2001) had stated that school experiences of immigrant children are shaped by the context and the interactions with adults and other children.

Research studies in border communities should be conducted in both the Mexican and the U.S. schools in order to be able to compare and contrast children's schooling in each context. Full-scale ethnographies, in which the researcher is immersed in the setting for at least a year of the school cycle, need to be conducted to develop in-depth descriptions of the culture of the school, including its people, structure, curriculum and ways of acting and interacting in various spaces within the school. An ethnography will also enable researchers to situate the school within its local community and larger social processes affecting what happens in the school (Green and Heras, in press).

Ethnographies of individual sites on both sides of the border can then provide a basis for cross-national comparisons of the schools and the learning opportunities afforded children in particular grade levels. A comparison of academic opportunities should take into account ways of teaching and ways in which teachers and students interact within classrooms. Additionally, given the importance of social aspects emphasized by children in my study, an ethnographically grounded cross national comparison can also examine children's ways of interacting with each other in various spaces and structures afforded by the school.

Ethnographic studies in schools on both sides of the border and cross-national comparisons based on these ethnographies can generate information about immigrant children's schooling experiences and how those experiences are shaped by the social, academic, political, economic and other factors of the school, community, and the country or state in which the student lives. Understanding the differences in school contexts and the consequences of those differences for children would enable educators to provide appropriate supports for students transitioning from a school on one side of the border to the other. In this way, research can become the basis for developing programs, informational sessions, curricular adaptations, and pathways of communication which can be designed to promote and support the needs of immigrant students, their parents, teachers, and others who can impact a child's education.

When full scale ethnographies are not feasible, longitudinal case studies and cross-case analyses (Borman, Clarke, Cotner, & Lee, 2006) focusing on individual children and their educational experiences can help uncover immigrant students' educational pathways and factors that support or constrain student school success. A researcher could purposefully select a few students at their entry to a U.S. school and then follow these students for three to five years, investigating the students' transitions, school experiences, academic and social challenges and opportunities, as well as student home and social environments. Given that research states that it takes four to seven years for a student to acquire academic language in a new setting (Cummins, 2006), a researcher who follows a child up to five years may be able to capture not only the language development and initial transitioning processes, but also the complexity of factors influencing the child's educational experiences and opportunities. If those years

include a student transitioning from an elementary to a junior high school, researchers could also investigate ways a new transition in the post-immigration setting shapes and is shaped by the student's prior experiences and educational achievements, as well as the student's goals, inclinations, and networks at the time of the new transition. Longitudinal case studies and cross-case analyses can provide insights about factors that support and constrain an immigrant child's education from the moment of entry through educational trajectories in the U.S. schools.

Ethnographic and longitudinal case studies as well as cross-national and cross-case comparisons have the potential of yielding much needed information about the complexity of factors that influence immigrant children's schooling experiences and academic achievement. Border areas such as Yolitzli-Ollin are a rich ground for conducting research which focuses on the children and their experiences holistically in context. By investigating and uncovering a multitude of factors shaping a child's education such research provides the basis for advocacy for the children. Research as social action (Skukauskaite & Green, 2010) which feeds back into the communities studied can impact the way immigrant children, their teachers, parents, and schools develop opportunities that support children's education and academic success.

Crossing the Boundaries of Differences and Acknowledging Similarities between Schools: Using Insights from This Study to Enhance Immigrant Students' School Experiences

Studying children's and their parents' and teachers' views on recent immigrant children's schooling experiences has made visible the challenges as well as possibilities

children encounter as they transition from a Mexican to a U.S. elementary school. The children, their families and teachers demonstrated how academic and social aspects influence children's school experiences and adaptation to school. My goal for this study was to gain an understanding of such experiences so that I can inform teachers and administrators within and beyond my own school as we work toward providing opportunities for success for recent immigrant and other students.

I plan to share the findings of this study with the teachers and staff at my school so that they can enhance their knowledge about recent immigrant children. I plan to work with teachers and staff to help them understand children's expectations of our school and how those expectations are influenced by the children's prior school experiences. I hope to help my colleagues become more aware of how language, school curriculum, recreational time, and peer support impact immigrant children's school experiences. I hope that by being informed, each member of the school can become an advocate for immigrant children, contributing to improving the children's school experiences and academic successes.

Communication between students and teachers, as well as between teachers and parents has been discovered as a common denominator for student success. My study demonstrated that when teachers take actions in establishing relationships with students and parents, they create opportunities for information sharing and mutual learning. I plan to share these findings with teachers in my school, inviting teachers to talk to the children and the parents about what they teach, how they teach, and how the current teaching practices differ or are similar to what the children had learned previously. As an instructional facilitator, I plan to develop professional development sessions in which the

teachers can come together to share information about immigrant student learning. I will invite children and parents as well as guest speaker teachers from Yolitzli to share their views and experiences of education. I will continue supporting teachers in establishing venues of communication with the students, their parents, as well as other teachers who have worked with immigrant children. Now every time I meet with a teacher to discuss immigrant students' academic performance, I first ask the teacher if he or she has taken the time to meet with the child's parents to discuss the strategies parents use at home to help the child.

Part of my contribution to the school involves fostering parent involvement. After discovering in this study about the differences in ways subjects are taught in Ollin and Yolitzli, I will create parental involvement opportunities in which parents can share what they know from their children's schools in Yolitzli. Building on that knowledge, I can then develop informational sessions and workshops to present to the parents the strategies used at Ollin to help students succeed in different subject areas as well as on the state assessments. In order to promote shared collaboration between teachers and parents, this year I will invite teachers to present to the parents a range of strategies teachers use for each of the subjects. I will then facilitate a discussion of how the strategies teachers present compare with strategies in Yolitzli. In this way, I will position teachers and parents as partners in enhancing children's educational opportunities.

Given the importance of native language support uncovered in my study, I will become more active in explicitly supporting the use of Spanish language in the school. Despite the school's move to early-transition programs which provide only one year of native language support for new immigrant students, I will ask the teachers and staff to

use Spanish whenever possible to help students learn, understand the school and classroom expectations, and become active participants seeking native language supports. Native language support in academic and social aspects of school can support recent immigrant students' language acquisition and transition into the new environment (Freeman and Freeman, 2004). My task as a school administrator is to promote and create opportunities for native language use as a way to support recent immigrant children's success in school. I will do this by using my own Spanish knowledge to communicate with the children as well as by inviting teachers, staff, and children to make visible, use, and celebrate their bilingualism.

Children participating in this study, as well as their parents and teachers, have provided rich information about factors that shape the children's educational experiences. My responsibility as a researcher and educator now is to use this knowledge to advocate for the children and to share the information with broader educational practitioner and researcher communities. As I share the findings of the study at conferences, informal conversations, and different venues beyond my local school, I hope to contribute to building a network of scholars and practitioners who work on supporting and enhancing immigrant children's opportunities for success.

Possibilities for Educational Change: Insights for the Larger Education Community

While this study captured experiences of ten children, their parents, and teachers in a particular elementary school in Ollin, Texas, the findings and implications of this study have possibilities of informing educators beyond the local context. First is the possible transferability of the findings to other border areas resembling Ollin-Yolitzli. Second is the potential to use this study's findings for considering how educational

systems need to adapt to ever increasing mobility and globalization processes (Cueva-Luna, 2009; Kitchen, 2007; Koheler et al., 2002).

Ollin South Elementary school, in which I conducted this study, is located in a border town which is closely interconnected to its neighboring community of Yolitzli in Mexico (Cueva-Luna, 2009; Romo, 2007). The 1,952 miles of the U.S. – Mexico border includes many towns, in which people's lives, economic and educational opportunities are interdependent. Cities and towns such as San Diego, CA bordering with Tijuana, Nogales, AZ bordering with Nogales, El Paso, TX bordering with Ciudad Juarez, and Laredo, TX bordering with Nuevo Laredo in Mexico all have many students who enroll in the U.S. schools at different stages in their educational trajectories (Rueda et al., 1994). Like the children in my study, they all bring different educational backgrounds and expectations to their new schools and communities. Understanding that differences in Mexican and the U.S. schools exist both in the academic and social aspects of schooling is the first step in finding ways to build on the differences and include student and their family ways of learning (Gonzalez et al., 2005), thus helping immigrant children bridge their educational experiences.

Children, teachers, and parents are all vested in children's success, which can be facilitated by drawing on the strengths of border communities. The availability of peers, teachers, and community members who speak an immigrant child's native language is a resource which can be utilized explicitly to help students access the U.S. school curriculum and transition into the new school more smoothly. Parent and teacher active roles in communicating the differences in learning and teaching in Mexico and the U.S. also provide opportunities for expanding student repertoires for learning and

understanding math, science, and reading processes and practices. Learning about the differences in teaching and schooling practices on two sides of the border can inform areas beyond the border about challenges immigrant and other diverse children face and about ways to bridge those challenges. Schools and teachers can reach out to parents and children, find ways to communicate with them, facilitate peer networks, and make visible similarities in the schooling processes and practices (Anderson-Levitt, 2003a). Through such actions schools can build bridges between student prior and current schooling experiences and can provide access for student and family active participation in educational processes.

This study also has a potential to provide insights for educators and policy makers beyond border areas. Anderson-Levitt (2002) argued that studying places in which educational changes and challenges are explicit can inform other places in which such changes are more subtle. Interviewing children, their families, and teachers in a border area, within the first three years of children's immigration into the U.S. school, revealed the most important aspects of schooling that shape children's education. Participants in this study demonstrated the importance of academic areas of language and curriculum, and the social supports of recreational time and peer networks as foundations for student school adaptation success. Analyses of what children, their parents and teachers said about their schooling also made visible the need to understand and bridge the differences of educational practices in different schooling systems. Such awareness of different ways of learning and accomplishing academic tasks can help prepare students for a fast changing world in which bi- and multi-lingualism, cooperative learning, problem solving, and lifelong learning skills, not the right answers and banking educational models (Freire,

1997) are keys to educational and life-long success (Anderson-Levitt, 2003b; Burbules & Torres, 2000; Jarvis, 2009; Skutnabb-Kangas, Phillipson, Mohanty, & Panda, 2009; Spring, 2008).

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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR STUDENT

1. Cuentame de la escuela en Yoliztli.

   Tell me about your school in Yoliztli.

2. ¿Como es la escuela ahora aca en Ollin?

   How is school like now in Ollin?

3. ¿Que es lo que más te gusta de esta escuela?

   What is it that you like the most about this school?

4. ¿Hay algo que no te guste de esta escuela?

   Is there anything you do not like about this school?

5. ¿Que es lo que más te gustaba de la otra escuela en Yoliztli?

   What is it that you liked the most about your other school in Yoliztli?

6. ¿Que consideras que es lo más difícil en esta escuela?

   What is hard for you in the school here?

7. ¿Cómo fué que empezaste a hacerte de amigos ?

   How did you start making friends?

8. ¿Qué te gustaría cambiar de esta escuela?

   Is there anything you would like to change in this school?

2nd Interview

Pictures will be taken in the pre-emigration schools to facilitate the second interview, and shown to children for comparing and contrasting purposes. Students will be asked to draw their schools

1. ¿Qué me podrías decir de tus dibujos ?

   What can you tell me about your drawings?

   Note: I will be looking at the students' drawings from both schools.

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR PARENTS

1. ¿Qué cambios ha notado en el comportamiento de su hijo (a) desde que lo inscribió en esta escuela?

   Have you noticed any changes in your child's behavior since he/she enrolled in this school? If so, in what ways?

2. ¿Cree que a su hijo le guste esta escuela? ¿Porqué?

   Do you think your child likes this school? Why?

3. ¿Que es lo que consideraría usted como retos para su hijo en esta escuela?

   What do you see as challenges for your child in this school?

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR TEACHERS

1. This is the _____year_____has been in school.
   (First, second, or third year) (Name of the student)

Tell me how you perceive this child's experience in school.

2. Do you think he/she has been adapting to the new school well?
3. Has the child ever mentioned his/her previous school?
4. How has this child been performing academically?
5. Has the child ever expressed learning a particular skill different than the way you are teaching it?
6. How do you see (name of student) interacting with other children?
7. What has been the most challenging situation experienced with (name of the student) as a teacher?
8. What do you wish you should've known prior to this child's enrollment that would enable you to help him/her better?

CURRICULUM VITAE

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Education

2007-2011 Ed. D. in Curriculum & Instruction with specialization in bilingual studies. University of Texas at Brownsville/ Texas SouthmostCollege

2002-2005 Master of Education Elementary Education-Bilingual / Mid-Management. University of Texas Pan American

1993-1998 Bachelors in Architecture with a minor in Construction
Professional License Number: 2708599
Builder Inspector License Number: DRO - I - 306

1994-1999 Bachelors in Education with a minor in Math & Physics
Professional License Number: 3250343

1998 Certified as a Building Appraiser by IPN (Instituto Politécnico Nacional Cd. de Mexico) and CECUR (Centro de Educación Continua en Reynosa, Mexico)

1999 Certified in Regional Historical Site & Building Restoration by CONACULTA (National Counselor for Culture and Arts), INAH (National Institute of Anthropology and History City of Matamoros and County Architects.

Professional Certifications

06/06	Texas Educator Certificate Principal EC-12
01/06	Texas Educator Certificate ESL Early Childhood-4th and 6-12
01/04	Texas Educator Certificate Bilingual Generalist Spanish Grades Early Childhood-4th
11/05	Texas Educator Certificate Generalist Early Childhood-4th
02/05	Texas Educator Certificate Secondary Spanish Grades 6-12

Professional Experience

2007 – present	Instructional Facilitator at R. E. Del Castillo Elementary, Brownsville, Tx.
2006 –2007	Instructional Facilitator at Tony González Elementary District Bilingual Coordinator

	Santa Maria, Tx.
2004- 2005	LEP Instructional Specialist at Santa Maria Middle School Santa Maria, Tx.
2003 – 2004	3rd grade Bilingual teacher (90/10 model/ dual language program) Mercedes, Tx.
2002 – 2003	Math tutor Veterans Upward Bound Program UTB/TSC
1999 – 2002	EFL Program Academic Coordinator Universidad Valle de Bravo. Matamoros, Mexico
2000- 2002	High School Teacher, CBTIS Centro de Bachillerato Tecnológico Industrial y de Servicios 189. Matamoros, Mexico
2000-2002	English as a Second Language Teacher. Centro Universitario del Noreste. Matamoros, Mexico.
1998 – 1999	CAD designer, and appraiser URVI Desarrollos y planeación urbana (City planning). Matamoros, Mexico.
1994 -1998	CAD designer, and appraiser Espacio y Proyecto, S.A. Matamoros, Mexico

University Teaching

2007	UTB Summer I Part-time adjunct instructor

Publications

"Educación bilingüe en los dos lados de la frontera" published by Resurgeré magazine. Fall 2006 edition, (MEXICO)

"Three for the Road: Strategies for Success with Bilingual Learners" (The work), "In Spotlight on Comprehension: Building a Literacy of Thoughtfulness" (The Book) authored by Linda Hoyt. Published by Heinemann, included in Part eight, chapter 49 (USA)
http://www.heinemann.com/shared/onlineresources/E00719/chapter2.pdf

"Educación bilingüe en los dos lados de la frontera" published by Contexto Educativo, a digital magazine for Education and Technology (ARGENTINA). http://contexto-educativo.com.ar/2006/1/nota-05.htm

Awards

2006	UTPA Excellence Scholarship recipient
2004-2005	Chancellor's List
2005-2006	Chancellor's List
2007-2008	Who's Who Among Professionals Cambridge List
2010	Fall Semester VPSA grant recipient
2011	Spring Semester Scorpion Fund recipient

Professional Associations

TABE and RGV/TABE Texas Association for Bilingual Educators
Association of Texas Professional Educators
Comparative International Education Society

Professional Presentations

"Challenges that Bilingual Teachers must confront in the South Texas Valley" presented at RGV/TABE 13th Annual Bilingual Education Conference: Journey to Bilingualism in South Texas. October 1st and 2nd/2004 at South Padre Island Convention Center. SPI, Tx.

"Total Physical Response" presented at the Conference for Secondary Teachers of LEP students. January 13th/ 2004 at Region One Education Center. Edinburg, Tx.

"Cómo enseñar ciencias en un salón de lenguaje dual" presented at the 2004-2005 Two-way bilingual symposium: Guiding our students to the Harbor of Success organized by Region One Education Center. May 6th & 7th/2005 at South Padre Island Convention Center. SPI, Tx.

"Story books as part of the reading curriculum" presented at the 2004-2005 Two-way bilingual symposium: Guiding our students to the Harbor of Success organized by Region One Education Center. May 6th & 7th/2005 at South Padre Island Convention Center. SPI, Tx.

"Instruccion tematica culturalmente relevante" presented at the 2004-2005 Seventh Annual Two-way Bilingual Education Symposium: Guiding our students to the Harbor of Success organized by Region One Education Center. May 6th & 7th/2005 at South Padre Island Convention Center. SPI, Tx.

"Estrategias de Lectura para ayudar a mis hijos en el TAKS" presented at the Second Annual Parent Conference, held on May 2005 at Santa Maria ISD.

"Retos que deben enfrentar los maestros bilingues en Texas" presented at the 33rd TABE 2005 Annual Conference Bilingual Education: Lightning the path toward a biliterate and multilingual America". October the 12-15th , 2005. American Bank Center, Corpus Cristi, Tx.

"Estrategias para la enseñanza de Ciencias en un salón de lenguaje dual" presented at the 33rd TABE 2005 Annual Conference Bilingual Education " Lightning the path toward a biliterate and multilingual America". October the 12-15th, 2005. American Bank Center, Corpus Cristi, Tx.

"Estrategias de Lectura para ayudar a mis hijos en el TAKS" presented at the 33rd TABE 2005 Annual Conference Bilingual Education " Lightning the path toward a biliterate and multilingual America". October the 12-15th, 2005. American Bank Center, Corpus Christi, Tx.

"Culturally relevant thematic instruction" presented at the annual TexTESOL State Conference: No Teacher Left Behind on November 3-5, 2005 at the Reinassance Dallas-Richardson Hotel. Dallas, Tx.

"LEP Student Succes Initiative Grant Development" presented at the Leadership Meeting for SSI Grant Recipients conducted on December 6th, 2005. Austin, Tx.

"Estrategias para la enseñanza de ciencias en un salón de lenguaje dual" presented at the RGV/TABE 14th Annual Bilingual Education Conference. January 13th and 14th/ 2006 at South Padre Island Convention Center. SPI, Tx.

"Total Physical Response" presented at the Conference for Secondary Teachers of LEP students: Promoting Border School Classroom Excellence. January 19th/ 2006 at Region One Education Center. Edinburg, Tx.

"Culturally relevant thematic instruction" presented at the Conference for Secondary Teachers of LEP students: Promoting Border School Classroom Excellence. January 19th/ 2006 at Region One Education Center. Edinburg, Tx.

"Estrategias para la enseñanza de Ciencias en un salón de lenguaje dual" for NABE at Phoenix, Az. January 20th, 2006.

"Estrategias de Lectura para ayudar a mis hijos en el TAKS" presented at the Texas United for a Better Tomorrow Texas Parent Coordinating Council Conference" hosted by Region One Esc and Region Two at the AmeriBank Center Corpus Christi, Tx. March 29th, 2006

"Programas Bilingües" presented at the Texas United for a Better Tomorrow Texas Parent Coordinating Council Conference" hosted by Region One Esc and Region Two at the AmeriBank Center Corpus Christi, Tx. March 29th, 2006

"Cómo enseñar ciencias en un salón de lenguaje dual" presented at the 2005-2006 Two-way bilingual symposium: The Best of two worlds organized by Region One Education Center. May 11th & 12th/2006 at South Padre Island Convention Center. SPI, Tx.

"Story books as part of the reading curriculum" presented at the 2005-2006 Two-way bilingual symposium: The Best of Two Worlds organized by Region One Education Center. May 11th & 12th/2007 at South Padre Island Convention Center. SPI, Tx.

"Instrucción temática culturalmente relevante en salones de doble lenguaje" presented at the 2005-2006 Two-way Bilingual Education Symposium: The best of two worlds organized by Region One Education Center. May 11th & 12th/2006 at South Padre Island Convention Center. SPI, Tx.

"Estrategias de Lectura para ayudar a mis hijos en el TAKS" presented at the RGV/TABE 15th Annual Bilingual Education Conference. October 6th and 7th, 2006 at South Padre Island Convention Center. SPI, Tx.

"Estrategias de Lectura para ayudar a mis hijos en el TAKS" presented at the NCLB Title II Statewide Initiative Parent Conference. November the 2nd-4th, 2006. AmeriBank Center Corpus Christi, Tx.

"Taller express para padres" presented at the Harvest to Harvard Migrant Conference on November the 17th, 2006. SPI Convention Center. South Padre Island, Tx.

"Cómo enseñar ciencias en un salón de lenguaje dual" presented at the 2007 NABE Conference on February the 8th, 2007. San Jose, CA. Mckinnery Convention Center.

"Lo que todo padre de familia debe de saber acerca de los programas bilingües" presented at the 2007 NABE Conference on February the 8th, 2007. San Jose, CA. Mckinnery Convention Center.

"Instrucción Temática Culturalmente Relevante en Salones de Doble Inmersión" presented at the 2007 NABE Conference on February the 8th, 2007. San Jose, CA. Mckinnery Convention Center.

"Estrategias de Lectura para ayudar a mis hijos en el TAKS" presented at BISD Del Castillo Elementary parent session on March 4, 2008.

"Estrategias de lectura para ayudar a mis hijos en el TAKS" presented at BISD Del Castillo Elementary parent session on February 26, 2009

"Concept attainment" presented at the Teaching, Learning, and Service Conference at UTB/TSC on March 7th, 2009.

"Estrategias de lectura para ayudar a mis hijos en el TAKS" presented at BISD Del Castillo Elementary parent session on February 26, 2010

"School experiencies on both sides of the border" presented at the 2010 TABE Conference "Transcending borders, transforming lives" on October 28th, 2010. El Paso, TX. Hotel Camino Real.

"Estrategias de Lectura para ayudar a mis hijos en el TAKS" presented at BISD Del Castillo Elementary parent session on February 17, 2011.

"Crossing borders and transforming expectations: School experiences of recent immigrant children in a public elementary school in South Texas" presented at the 55th Comparative International Education Society conference on May 4th, 2011 at Montreal, Quebec, Canada.